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# *Stirring the Eagle's Nest*

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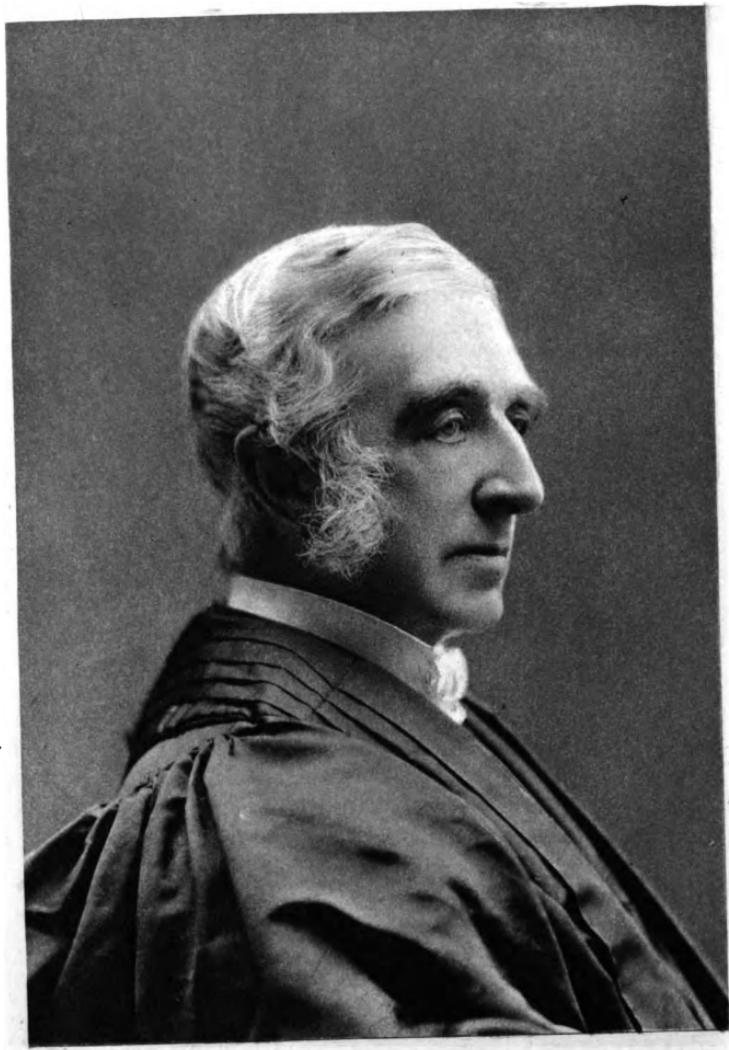




## **STIRRING THE EAGLE'S NEST.**







Thos. L. Gaynor





# STIRRING THE EAGLE'S NEST

AND OTHER PRACTICAL DISCOURSES

*By*  
**THEODORE L. GUYLER, D. D.**

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*To A. E. C.*

**THE BELOVED WIFE WHO HAS FILLED  
MY HOME WITH SUNSHINE  
FOR NEARLY FORTY  
YEARS**

**This Volume is Gratefully Inscribed.**



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I.

STIRRING THE EAGLE'S NEST.



# I

## STIRRING THE EAGLE'S NEST.

"As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings, so the Lord above did lead him."—DEUTERONOMY xxxii, 11.

HERE is a text for the naturalist and for the Christian—for the student of birds and for the student of Providence. Audubon might introduce it into his Chapter on Eagles ; Spurgeon might make it the theme for a "morning reading" on God's love for His people. And it is a grand theme, whether for the ornithologist or the child of God.

The passage before us is a brief and beautiful parable. To get the full benefit of it, we must look first at its literal facts, and then at its moral and spiritual teachings. The parable is of the Eagle—the king of all the feathered tribes. What the majestic sequoia is among the trees, what the gorgeous cactus is among flowering plants, what the lion of Numidia is among wild beasts, that is the eagle among the birds of heaven. Naturalists tell us that he has tremendous strength in his wings. He bears up against the tempest—flies in the teeth of a

gale—soars up to untold heights—goes out on long voyages toward the sun, and after playing the aéronaut for hours, he wheels downward toward his rocky nest. That nest is, like himself, on a right royal scale.

It is sometimes fashioned—a yard square—of billets of wood, and inlaid with rushes and mountain heather. Not down among the reeds and grass does the eagle build ; not even among the tree-tops—but far up on the crags of mountain-peaks. When the prophet Obadiah would denounce the pride of Edom, he says : “Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the Lord.” Up in this airy home—surrounded by desolate solitudes and far above the noise and smoke of human habitation—the mother eagle rears her young. Stout and fierce though she be, yet she has a true parent’s instincts. While they need to be fed, she feeds them. But when they are old enough to fly, she trains them for the perilous process. To this process our text refers.

She “*stirreth up the nest.*” However cozy and comfortable it may be, however closely the young eaglets may cling to their home, she stirs them out. They are afraid to fly, and sit timidly on the edge of the nest, looking out into the wide air and down into the chasms beneath them. So she spreadeth abroad her ample wings—“taketh them on her wings” as

on an aërial car, and soars out for a sail ! It is dizzy work up there and dangerous. But to the broad, stalwart wings of the parent bird the little fellows cling, and she transports them safely. This is the first lesson. At length they are thrust out to try their own wings. They may, at first, reel to and fro, flutter about, and catch some rough falls against cliff or tree-top. But they are learning, and without practice they never can fly. They must run some risks, or else be left to starve in their nests. They improve by each attempt. Their wings grow stronger, and they grow more expert in using them. And ere long the eaglet can fly like the mother bird, and keep her company in all her chase for sport or spoil.

I. This is a picturesque process that we have been looking at, and we will find it an object-lesson well worth our studying. We may learn many things from these brute teachers, with their sagacity of instinct, parental affection, and noble daring. We may apply this parable—in the first place—to the secular and domestic life with which many of us are familiar.

A wise and thrifty parent rears his brood around the hearthstone and the family altar. The fireside is pleasant, and home is dear. But the nest gets full and cannot hold them all. If the boys and girls nestle all together, as consumers and not producers, the whole

household will soon come to want. So the prudent father "stirs up the nest." The eldest-born must fly out, and learn to shift for themselves. The parting from home gives a hard wrench to the heart, and the very thought of pushing out into the strange world has some terrors in it. As the good mother—God bless her! packs the trunk of her darling boy, many a tear falls in upon the lad's wardrobe. She stows in many a useful "knicknacket" and precious keepsake that no one but a mother would ever think of. She bids him remember her, as she will remember him in her prayers night and day. "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not!" Homespun father has his good counsels also—never to shirk hard work and never to stain his lips with a lie, or an oath, or an intoxicating cup. And so the young eaglet leaves the old rustic nest—borne out on the wings of prayer and parental affection, and with warm kisses and tears rained on the young, resolute face. He must try his own wings now and learn to fly for himself. With sturdy arm and sharp self-denial and patient toil he soon begins to push upward. First failures and some disappointments, instead of scorching his courage, only fire him to fresh ventures and more disciplined endeavors. That mighty arm of God, that helps those who bravely help themselves, steadies him forward in his persistent push,

until he is able at last to build his own nest among the cliffs with a free eagle spirit. He becomes the thrifty man of business, the useful citizen—and when ascending prayers have returned in converting grace he becomes the earnest follower of Christ. For as surely as good plowing and good planting produce good crops, so surely does wise and godly nurture yield an after life of secular and spiritual good-fruitage. This is the rule, which no occasional exception can invalidate.

Whoever of you would have your sons and daughters make your hearts rejoice must not dream that they can be left at home to shiftless indolence, or enervating self-indulgence. Next to teaching your children Christ, teach them to work. "He who brings up a child to no trade, brings up a child for the devil," is an old Jewish proverb worthy of observance in our modern American homes. Try to discover just what your children were made for; set before them the highest and the holiest aims, and impress upon them that life is only a trust to be held for God and for the good of others. Then stir the nest, and let the young eaglets fly! So rose the shepherd boy Sanderson to the astronomic chair of Edinburgh University, and the weaver boy Livingstone to be the sublimest missionary hero of our time. So rose our beloved Lincoln from his frontier cabin to that lofty eminence in which his heaven-or-

dained mission was to bind up the Union and to unbind the slave. The younger Franklin was pushed out of the nest to struggle for himself ; and he rose among the clouds to play with the forked lightnings. It was from humble beginnings in a Kelvedon cottage that Spurgeon wheeled up in his majestic flight—the royalest eagle of our modern ministry.

II. Now, in the second place, let us advance to a more directly spiritual aspect of this subject. God deals with His children as the eagle deals with her young. He sees that His children are too often determined to nestle. They build earthly nests for themselves ; surround themselves with various comforts and luxuries, and then settle down to enjoy them. Instead of setting their affections on things above, they set them on things beneath ; instead of seeking to become “rich *toward God*” they are selfishly content to be rich *from God*. As wealth enlarges, worldly ambition enlarges also; and I do not observe that grace always grows in the same ratio with a growing income. The new circumstances and conditions bring new ideas of living, new expenditures, and new luxuries. The old residence (for example) must be supplanted with a mansion whose splendor shall reflect the splendid financial successes of its owner. And in the decoration of it, what brain-racking and consultation and absorption of time and thought and

treasure! When the ambitious design has been carried out, and pride has added the top-stone to its temple, then the flatteries and congratulations of summer friends begin to ascend like intoxicating incense into the nostrils of the lord of the manor. "This will do now," says Brother Plutus to himself complacently; "I will take comfort. Business thrives. My wife and daughters are gaining the *entrée* of all perfumed precincts of society." So he nestles. They all nestle in a most luxurious state of spiritual slumber. Their piety has been rocked to sleep in that sumptuous nest. The devotions and the religious duties, which belonged to their humbler and better days, are now as completely *tabooed* as is a yellow-fever patient at the gates of the Quarantine hospital.

Well, now, if God strikes in upon that nest with crushing disasters or bereavements, do you wonder? If bankruptcy bring that splendid establishment to the hammer, or if calamity sweep away those idols; if Death mount those sumptuous stairways and writes paleness on some cheek of roses, do you wonder? God saw that His children were beginning to nestle and to become too worldly for their soul's health. So He stirred up that nest of self-indulgence, and in the very way that they would feel most keenly. Not in revenge does He do it; not in cruelty, but in love to their

souls, and in tender jealousy for the honor of their Christian name and character. When any member of Christ's flock surrounds himself—or herself—with worldly idols, and renders the heart to them, and worships them, and robs Christ for them, then he or she may expect that neglected Saviour to break up that idol-worship—even if sharp chastisements be employed to accomplish it. Ah! have we not often seen such awakened and smitten souls start up from their spiritual slumbers and try once more a flight heavenward? Have we not seen them—with wings that had been weakened by long disuse—endeavor to soar again? As an eagle taketh her young upon her wings and beareth them, so the patient love of God has borne up His backslidden and penitent children. He has taken them on the strong pinions of His imparted grace. He has kindled by His Holy Spirit fresh desires after Him, and awakened their torpid affections. They have gone back to their Bibles and to their knees. To the cross have they gone—in confession and in tears, and have sought the forgiveness of Him who has been wounded in the house of His friends. They have laid hold again of long neglected duties, and honestly confessed, “it is good for me that I have been afflicted; for before I was chastised I went astray.” God is dealing with them as with sons; and what wayward and disobedient son

is there that He chastiseth not? "He restoreth my soul!" is the joyful cry of the pardoned and reconverted backslider, as he rises once more into the sweet and full communion with his forgiving Lord. His song now is :

"And as on eagle's wings I soar  
I see the face of Christ once more,  
And heaven comes down my soul to meet  
And glory crowns the mercy-seat."

III. Let us now advance to a third thought suggested by this prolific passage. When God permits any immortal being to nestle down in worldly possessions or sinful pleasures, undisturbed, unaroused, and unawakened, is it not a terrible calamity? Could a greater curse come upon such a person than to be *let alone* by the Holy Spirit? Would not that "nest" of selfishness and hardened indifference to God become the prelude to righteous divine wrath and red burnings? If the young eaglet would become a sorry weakling in its nest, and finally be left to starve if it were never trained to fly, how true it is, also, that any soul that is left alone in guilty indifference and unbelief will come to eternal ruin. It is divine love that awakens the sinner to his guilt and danger. Love sends the arrow of conviction into the soul. Love drives that arrow in deeper and deeper. God so loves the self-condemned sinner that He not only has sent His only-begotten Son to die for him, but sends His awaken-

ing Spirit with the thrilling appeal, "Awake thou that sleepest! turn ye; turn ye; for why will ye die?" God stirs him up. The living gospel comes with strong, fearless hand, and overturns his refuges of lies—rips to pieces his self-righteousness—reveals to him his guilt and the divine displeasure with his sins—and bids him repent and prepare to meet his offended God. As the hooked talon of the parent eagle shakes the nest and stirs out the younglings, so God's Spirit with the arm of Truth shakes the sinner from his false security. As with an Ithuriel spear—keen and sharp as the lightning—the Holy Spirit arouses the guilty soul to the enormous sinfulness of sin, and points him to the cross before him, the heaven above him, and the hell beneath him! Into his ears the trumpet voice proclaims—"the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ!" And so the fire that is kindled in his conscience drives the convicted transgressor to the cross of Calvary. This has been, in innumerable cases, the process of our Heavenly Father in bringing myriads of His children to the new life here, and the endless life hereafter.

Say you that this is harsh or unkind? Say you that the threatenings of God's holy Word or the utterances of a faithful pulpit against sin are wanton cruelty? Nay verily. They are the very essence of loving-kindness. A

cathartic medicine may be very nauseous, but a wise physician often administers it in mercy to his sick patient. It was a terrible process for our brave "boys in blue" to be bound to the surgeon's table and to see the amputating-knife flashed before their eyes ; but better lose a limb than a life. No one likes to be startled out of a comfortable sleep at midnight ; but if you see the black smoke belching out of your neighbor's window you do not hesitate to break into his house with the cry of "Fire ! *fire ! FIRE !*" and to drag him and his household out through the suffocating smoke and flame. It were a diabolical cruelty not to stir up that home-nest on which the flames were kindling. One of our most heroic Arctic explorers tells us that several of his men who had left the vessel were lost amid drifting snow and ice for two whole days. When found they were barely alive. Alcohol had frozen in a bottle by their side, and the thermometer marked seventy degrees below freezing-point. Dreamy slumbers—mingled with visions of delightful sleep by warm firesides—were stealing over the poor, freezing creatures that were almost benumbed in death. As they were dragged back through forty hours of terrible march over ice-fields, the stoutest of them begged to "lie down and sleep." "We are not cold," they protested, "we only want to lie down and rest." An hour of treacherous slumber would have

left each one a stiffened corpse. Their leader was compelled to beat them, beg them, threaten them—anything to keep off the fatal lethargy until the vessel could be reached. Poor fellows! they were delirious with pain and hunger when they staggered over the icy deck of the brig into the cabin with its reviving warmth. But they were saved. *The hand that roused them was the hand that saved them.* Every soul in this assembly who ever reaches heaven will be forced to make the same acknowledgment; the arm that aroused us in our guilt will be the theme of our gratitude in the realms of glory.

Oh, my brethren, is there no resemblance between that Arctic scene and the condition of the Church whose members lie down and freeze together into a spiritual torpor? As their active energies become slowly benumbed, their sense of safety becomes more serene and complacent. They are satisfied with their preaching and their privileges—satisfied with themselves—and satisfied to let perishing souls stumble over them into perdition! All they ask for is—peace and the quiet enjoyment of their well spread table.

Now into such an orthodox refrigerator—where the only unity consists in their being “frozen solid”—God has often sent His Holy Spirit to stir them up, and bring them to repentance. Sometimes He has done this by the voice of a fearless ambassador, and sometimes

by the voice of a startling Providence. At first the stiffened limbs were slow to move, and the rigid lips were slow to articulate. But the baptism of fire descended—and the love of Jesus, shed abroad in some hearts, enkindled others until the blessed flame of a genuine Revival set the whole Church aglow! Oh, blessed Jesus! source of all light and life, pour thyself into all our souls as a flame of fire, quickening us to a new life, warming our affections to a sacred glow, consuming our unholy passions and lusts, filling us with the power from on high, and making us all burning and shining lights for Thine own honor and glory!

IV. Before I close let me interject into this discussion a very practical truth suggested by an incident of eagle life. It is said that a shepherd once observed an eagle soar away from the brow of a lofty cliff into the air. The movements of the bird soon became eccentric; it descended in its course; soon one wing dropped and then the other, and in a few moments the noble bird fell rapidly to the ground. The shepherd picked up the dead bird to examine the cause of its eccentric movements and its fall. He discovered that a small serpent had fastened itself under the bird's wing and pierced its way into the flesh; and when the deadly fangs reached the heart, the poor eagle fell! This, too, is a parable—with quite too many melancholy fulfillments on every side of

us. We have sometimes seen a person rise into a prominent position of influence in the Church and in the community. But presently his conduct began to excite suspicion and then alarm, and ere long he was prostrate in the dust—a pitiable spectacle for scoffers to jeer at and for charity to weep over. The eye of God saw what we had not suspected—how some secret sin—some departure from strict integrity, or some indulgence of fleshly lusts, or some concealed crime against conscience, or some other deadly sin against the Holy Spirit, had struck its way into the heart, and brought the eagle down ! Whosoever thinketh that he standeth, let him take heed lest he fall. All sin is deceitful, but never more so than when it fastens itself upon a Christian ; and may God in His tender mercy help you and me to beware of the *serpent at the heart!*

The parable that we have chosen for our topic to-day is prolific in more suggestion and instruction than we have time now to consider. There is one, however, that must not be omitted. When the eagle has stirred up her nest and brought out her younglings, she teacheth them to *soar*. From the lower atmosphere of earth she beareth them upward toward the empyrean. It is her congenial atmosphere—for which she was created. Sparrows may twitter on the house-tops ; wrens may flit among the shrubbery, and owls may hoot in the midnight

forest. But eagles are children of the skies, and playmates of the storm. With stalwart wings they rise above the clouds and fly in company with the sun.

“They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength ; they shall mount up with wings as eagles.” God desires that every soul that waits on Him shall not creep, or grovel in the muck of worldliness, or crouch in wretched bondage to men or devils. When a soul is joined to Jesus by faith, that soul finds wings. Such an one has his “citizenship in the heavens.” He catches inspiration from the indwelling Spirit. He rises above the chilling fogs of doubt, gains wide and ennobling outlook, and actually realizes his heirship to a celestial inheritance. He outflies the petty vexations that worry the worldling, and the lusts which drag the sensual soul down into the mire. His inner life is hid with Christ in God. What to him, in his best hours and holiest fellowship with Jesus—what to him is the fear of man or the greed of gold, or the sting of poverty, or the grief of bereavement, or the apprehension of coming death ? What cares the eagle, as he bathes his wing in the translucent sunbeam—for the turmoil, the smoke, the clouds, or even the lightning that plays beneath him ? His companionship is with the King of day. So, a heaven-bound soul, filled with the joys of the Holy Spirit, flies in company with God !

The nearer you and I get to God, the purer will be our spiritual atmosphere, and the more thoroughly, humbly, and earnestly will we discharge every duty to our fellow-men. Nor will we expect to reach heaven before our time. We shall not be "flighty" in our aims or "airish" with vain-glory even when we rise into the fullest fellowship with the Unseen and the Eternal. Blessed be the trials, however sharp, that keep us from nestling down into selfishness and sloth ! Blessed be the discipline, however painful or severe, that stirs up our nests and teaches us to live as sons and daughters of the Almighty and heirs of our unfading crown !

II.  
**THE NEW BIRTH.**



## II.

### THE NEW BIRTH.

“Ye must be born anew.”—JOHN iii, 7 (Revised Version).

PROBABLY the most remarkable conversation that ever took place between any two persons on this globe was that which occurred upon an evening in Easter week in the city of Jerusalem. It was made so remarkable both by the character of the conversers and the vital magnitude of the themes which were presented. Into a score of brief verses are condensed the core truths out of which have sprouted whole forests of discourses and commentaries. The great central truths of Christianity—human guilt, the atonement by Christ, regeneration by the Spirit, the doctrine of the Trinity, God’s love in redemption, the need and the nature of faith, and the promise of heaven—are all packed into this one short, simple, solemn talk. Just such an “inquiry meeting” was never held before or since. Two persons composed it: the one was the Teacher come from God; the other was a teacher who came from the Jewish Sanhedrim. The one person was Jesus Christ;

the other was Nicodemus, the Pharisee—in fact, the *only* Pharisee that we ever read of as coming to Christ in the humble attitude of a seeker after truth. This Pharisee came to Jesus at night, by lamplight. Six years afterward another Pharisee was brought to Jesus at noonday in a flash of lightning.

St. John is the only one of the four evangelists who has recorded the conversation which we are now to study. As John had a “home” in Jerusalem, it is very probable that Jesus was lodging with him during the season of the Passover. To the dwelling in which Christ is stopping comes this Nicodemus, a member of the proud sect of the Pharisees, a ruler of the Jews, a councilor of the Sanhedrim. This is about all we are told of him. As he was an honest Jew, he expected the approach of the Messiah; as he was a thoughtful man, he may have been thinking: “Perhaps this extraordinary character who is working such miracles may be the Messiah; who knows?” So he sallies off to hold an interview with the stranger. It would have been a very bold and hazardous step for him to visit Jesus in broad daylight; he was himself a member of the high court of the Sanhedrim, and this Jesus of Nazareth had aroused a violent commotion by scourging a herd of hucksters and money-changers out of the Temple bazaars. If Nicodemus had not been in dead

earnest, he would not have come to Jesus at all. Do not stigmatize the ruler as a coward : there are scores in our congregations who have not acted yet as bravely and as sensibly as he.

At night the streets of Jerusalem are not thronged ; no city lamps illuminate the narrow thoroughfares. Here and there a few poor women may be grinding out their grain in the hand-mill, or a Roman sentinel may be pacing his rounds. A strong spring wind is sweeping through the streets, for it suggests the illustration which Jesus would soon give of the mysterious influence of the Holy Spirit, like an unseen breeze, upon the soul. Through the silent streets Nicodemus hurries along, perhaps concealing his face with his mantle. He climbs the outside stairway and reaches the guest-chamber on the roof. A plain, coarsely clad personage is sitting there by his olive-oil lamp—perhaps all alone, perhaps conversing with his host, the disciple John. Nicodemus enters, extends his jeweled hand to the Nazarene, bows his turban in respectful reverence, and addresses him with the honorable appellation of "Rabbi," which signifies a great teacher, a superior teacher. "Rabbi," says the Pharisee, "we know that thou art a teacher come from God ; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest except God be with him." This sentence of Nicodemus is very incomplete, but it is respectful ; it is

honest ; it admits that Christ is a divinely sent instructor ; it opens the way.

Jesus meets it with calm dignity, and does not begin to play sycophant and assure his titled visitor what a distinguished honor he has done him by calling on him. Calmly and kindly looking the ruler not only in the eye, but in the *heart*, he startles him with the abrupt and solemn declaration, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be *born again*, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Such were the startling words as they are rendered in our Common Version. But Coverdale's translation of the New Testament and some other versions make it read, "Except a man be born *from above*, he cannot see the kingdom of God." The Greek word "anothen" has two significations: it sometimes means "from above," and sometimes it means "from the beginning," "over again" or "anew." While it is true that every genuine Christian is "born of God," and is thus regenerated from above, yet Christ intended to tell Nicodemus that he must have the second birth, the spiritual birth, if he would ever hope to enter God's kingdom. The word "*again*" is not a happy word to be used here, because "*again*" implies a repetition of the same old previous process. But the word "*anew*" signifies that Nicodemus should pass through a *new* birth that might be anal-

ogous to a physical birth, but by no means the *same* process.

The Jewish ruler evidently misunderstands Christ. He grasps hold of the poor, pitiful idea of a second bodily birth, and with unaffected wonder he asks, "How can a man be born when he is an *old* man? Can he enter the womb a second time and be born?"

Jesus does not either reproach or ridicule the ruler for his want of apprehension, as some unwise teachers get out of patience with a dull scholar who is not quick to catch an idea. He explains his meaning. He knew that Nicodemus considered himself as belonging to the kingdom of God, because he had a natural birth from the "seed" or stock of Abraham. Jesus explodes this delusion at once by giving Nicodemus to understand that the kingdom of God was for Gentiles as well as for Jews, and was not monopolized by Abraham's descendants, but was open to everybody through one single door, and that was a new spiritual birth. A new life must begin, of which the Divine Spirit is the only author—a new heart, issuing in new conduct and new character. This is the tremendous truth which the Son of God (who sat beside him in human clothes) opens up to the astonished Pharisee.

"Verily, verily"—as if he wanted to drive the nail of conviction in strong—"verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of

water and of the Spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of flesh is flesh ; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." *Water* and *Spirit* are the two significant words which Christ employs. The first word signifies *cleansing*, and the second word signifies *quickening into life*. Nicodemus required purification and a renewal of the whole man. His old filthy heart, defiled with sin, must be purified. Old sins must be repented of and abandoned. He must die unto sin before he could be born unto righteousness. The old evil life must die out, and a new life—a life produced by God himself—must begin to exist, just as truly as a baby begins to exist when it enters this world.

"That which is born of the flesh *is* flesh." Jesus teaches his wondering pupil that the physical body and mental organism which the babe receives from its parents is just like that of the parents. The "flesh" is that part of our nature which unites us to this material world ; the "spirit" is that which unites us to the unseen and eternal world. This spiritual part of us was to be so changed by God's Spirit that we would enter into a new state of being. Nicodemus must not only begin to act differently, but he must *be* a different man in the very core and heart of him. Observe carefully here that Christ does not say to Nicodemus, "Now you must lop off your old prac-

tices, and you must lower your Pharisaical pride, and you must not behave like some of your brethren who eat up the property of poor widows and then varnish their sins with long prayers." Nothing of all this—nothing, in short, about acts and practices of any kind. Jesus cleaves right to the very root, and says to his auditor, " You must **BE** a new man." This new birth, or what we call regeneration, is vastly more than a change of mental acts or of external practices. Regeneration is the implanting of a new controlling *principle* in the human soul. No new faculty is introduced, but a new disposition and spiritual taste; things once loved are hated, things once hated are now loved. Over and over again the word of God recognizes this truth, that a person may be so revolutionized in his affections, tastes, and disposition that it is nothing less than a new birth into a new life. In the old parchment copy of the Psalms, which Nicodemus had often heard read in his synagogue, was this fervent prayer of the Psalmist, "Create in me, O God, a clean heart." David referred here to the very fountain head of thought, word, and deed—to that inner disposition or controlling principle which lies *behind* all words and deeds. Christ referred to the same inner *source* of all conduct and character when he declared that "a good tree bringeth forth good fruits, and a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruits." The

heart is the tree ; the words and the daily conduct are the fruits. Nicodemus had no doubt himself recognized the existence of this internal disposition, which is the basis of moral character. One of his own boys, perhaps, was a joy and crown to him because he was in the *habit* of being truthful, kind, and obedient. Another son may have constantly tormented him and the whole household by his spiteful retorts and malicious pranks. Therefore, the father spoke of one as a noble-hearted boy and the other as a bad-hearted boy. It was the habit of the one to do well, and the habit of the other to do badly. This habit or disposition is not a separate mental faculty ; it is something that may be totally changed as to its character, so that a person may have one kind of moral disposition or habit of heart at one period of life, and the very opposite disposition at another period. A boy may be so generous as to share his Christmas gifts with his playmates. In his old age he may become such a miser that he begrudges the lamplight to "see to die by."

There is such a thing, then, as a controlling disposition, taste, and habit of mind that lies behind and beneath all conduct. It is the source of conduct, it shapes character. The Bible calls it "the *heart*." Regeneration is the radical change of that heart. A new birth is the beginning of a new style of thinking,

feeling, deciding, and acting. One morning Saul of Tarsus was a bitter persecutor, with his heart on fire with hatred of Jesus. Before sunset he was so utterly revolutionized, that he was down on his knees praying to that very crucified Christ for pardon and guidance. Saul was the same man in bodily form and mental faculties ; he was a totally different man in his spiritual dispositions. Nautically speaking, it was the same ship, but with another hand at the helm, another ensign at the peak, and the bow "headed" in the very opposite course from which she had been sailing before. Saul had a new birth on that memorable day ; it was his spiritual birthday. A new life came into his soul, and the *Lord Jesus Christ was that life.* "He that hath the Son hath life ; he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." Huxley and Herbert Spencer admit that in the natural world no life was ever self-generated, and that only life can produce life. In the spiritual world the same law holds true ; and the Lord Jesus Christ declared that except a man be born anew—*i. e.*, receives a new life into his soul—he can never enter the kingdom of God.

All this is now the central and the simple truth of gospel teaching—a truth that the boy and girl of the Sabbath school can grasp and understand. Dr. Leifchild tells us that he once met a lad twelve years old at a tollgate who

had a Testament in his hand. "Can you read it?" inquired the doctor. "To be sure I can. I can read to you this: 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.'" "What does that mean, my boy?" The lad quickly replied: "It means a *great change*. To be born again means something *here* [lay-his hand upon his breast], and the kingdom of God means something *up yonder*." That boy had got hold of the very core of Bible theology.

II. But what was so clearly revealed to that lad in his Bible was yet a mystery and a puzzle to the Jewish ruler who sat on that April evening beside the great Teacher from Nazareth. Nicodemus, startled and bewildered with this new gospel of regeneration, inquires, "Rabbi, how can these things be?" Jesus employs an illustration close at hand in order to explain this "how" which so perplexes the ruler. Listen to that night wind as it whistles through the silent streets. Its sound is distinctly audible; when it shakes and bends the trees over on Olivet its effects are distinctly visible. Yet no eye sees the wind. "Thou hearest the sound thereof," says Jesus to Nicodemus, "but canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth; so is everyone that is born of the Spirit." The wind is invisible, so is the Spirit of God. The laws which govern the wind are not comprehended; neither are those by which the Holy

Spirit acts on the human soul. The presence of the night-wind and the influence of the wind are distinctly felt ; there is no doubt of that fact. Even so the presence and influence of this loving and all-powerful Spirit are an actual experience, a deep experience, an experience of old sinfulness rooted up and a new life imparted. Mysterious as is this new birth of a converted soul, yet it is as real, as palpable, and as visible in its results as is the effect of a wind in swaying the trees, or the effect of sunbeams in quickening plants from bulbs to stalks and from bare stalks to flowers and fruitage. The "*how*" of the Holy Spirit's working on your soul and on my soul is beyond our comprehension. But the glorious fact remains in the experience of every converted man : " You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." Truthfully has our old friend Professor Hitchcock remarked that "the new birth is a stupendous mystery, which can be known only by being experienced ; it is a mystery even after its accomplishment. Always will it be a matter of grateful wonder to the Christian how the Spirit of all grace ever gently forced the fastenings of his heart and wrought there so efficiently, and yet so sweetly, his saving work. On the one hand, it is plain that no new mental faculty is called into being. It is equally plain that there has been something more than moral suasion." Precisely what it is that

has happened to us we cannot say ; nor can we say just how the Divine Spirit wrought that marvelous change which we call regeneration, and which Christ described as being “born *anew*.” This we do know, however : that once we were blind and now we see. Once we were guilty, and now we have found pardon. Once we loved to do what we now abhor. Once we cared nothing for Jesus, the Son of God, and now we trust ourselves to him, and are glad to listen to his voice and to obey him. It don’t seem to us as if the old rotten timbers have been only whitewashed, but rather that they have been torn out and new solid timber from God’s tree of life put into their place. Beloved reader, have you ever experienced this radical change, this new birth by the Holy Spirit ? Then shout your praises to God for this “gift of eternal life,” and *live like a new man* or a new woman. If you have not, then seek it at once ; yield yourself to Jesus at once ; for what he said to Nicodemus he rings in your ears to-day : “Ye **MUST** be born anew, or ye cannot see the kingdom of God.”

III. But one more vital and essential truth remained to be explained to Nicodemus and to be explained to you. Christ had told the Jewish ruler that he must be thoroughly changed in heart—that he must be “born anew” into a new and purer, stronger, holier life. Christ



had told him that the Divine Spirit is the author of this new birth in such a way and degree that nobody can possibly be converted without the agency of the Spirit. Now remains the all-important question: What shall a man *do* in order to secure this new life? The quick reply is, *Believe on the Son of God*; whosoever believeth on the Son of God *hath* everlasting life. This is the vital step for Nicodemus and for you to take. But why trust on the Son of God? What has the Son of God done for you to make your salvation possible? What has he done to make it possible for God to forgive your sins? What has he done to secure a new life for a sinner like you? Listen to Christ's answer. It is Christ's own description of his own wonderful atonement for the sins of guilty, dying men. Listen to him as he gives the final answer to the question of Nicodemus, "*How can these things be?*" The answer is this: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever trusteth on him should not perish, but have eternal life." No doubt Nicodemus had often heard of that thrilling scene in the camp of Israel where hundreds had been poisoned by the bite of venomous snakes, and a serpent of brass was lifted by Moses upon a pole, and whoever had the faith to fix his eyes on that brazen object recovered from the bite. Even so was Jesus,

the Son of God, to be "lifted up"—suspended upon the cross of Calvary in the sight of a guilty, sin-cursed world. Christ did not refer here to his final exaltation as the King of glory. The brazen serpent was not hung up in the same sense of being honored. Jesus referred most distinctly and undeniably to his own crucifixion: "I, if I be *lifted up* from the earth, will draw all men unto me." This means nothing else but Christ's death on the cross to atone for you and me. The design of elevating the brazen serpent was to secure recovery to the snake-bitten Israelites. The glorious design of Christ's atoning death on the cross was to secure eternal life to sin-bitten souls. What must the Israelite *do* in order to be healed? Simply, obey God and fix his eye on the brazen emblem. What must Nicodemus do, and what must you and I do, in order to secure this work of the Holy Spirit and to secure everlasting life? The reply flashes back as in a blaze of noonday sunlight: The way to secure the new birth and to produce the new life is to *look to Jesus* with the eye of the soul, and to *lay hold* of Jesus with the soul's utmost trust, and to *let Jesus have you*, own you, and control you. Everyone who accepts Jesus Christ into his soul accepts eternal life. As all human life begins with birth, the acceptance of Jesus Christ marks and makes the new birth. As the Holy Spirit imparts this new

life, no human soul can be born anew or converted without him.

Notice what a tremendous emphasis Christ gives to that word **MUST**—"Ye *must* be born anew." Other things depend on the weaker word "may." You and I may be rich or we may be poor, we may live long or die young, we may be cultured or we may be illiterate; none of these are vital matters. But we *must* be born into the life of Christ or perish forever.

True science declares that life never can spring up of itself. It must come from some other living organism. Jesus Christ is the only source of spiritual life in this world or another. Therefore, we *must* have Christ.

Science will tell you that all human life, bodily or spiritual, must have a beginning or a birth. Therefore, if the life of Christ ever be in us, it must have a start or a birth. Unless Christ comes in he cannot *be* in your heart. Therefore, *ye must* be born anew.

Experience declares that no one was ever regenerated without the power of Christ's Holy Spirit. Therefore, you must be born anew by that Spirit's agency. Quench not that Holy Spirit. You might as well try to hear without ears, or breathe without lungs, as to live a Christian life without the Spirit of Christ in your heart. Therefore, *you must* be born anew.



III.  
**BURDEN-BEARING.**



### III.

## BURDEN-BEARING.

"Every man shall bear his own burden."—**GALATIANS vi, 5.**

"Bear ye one another's burdens."—**GALATIANS vi, 2.**

"Cast thy burden upon the Lord."—**PSALM lv, 22.**

HERE is a threefold cord that is not easily broken. I trust that you will all grasp hold of it and be lifted out of your cares and complainings, out of your doubts and your despondencies. While there is an apparent contradiction between these three texts, there is not really the slightest discordance. They blend beautifully together, like the bass, the tenor, and the alto in some sweet melody. God's truth has no discords. Errors conflict with each other; but all truths run parallel, like railway tracks, that might belt the globe and never come in conflict.

With this preliminary fact in mind, let us study these passages. They treat of the *bearing of burdens*. Can any topic be more thoroughly practical? For every human life—high or humble—has its loads; and much of the comfort, the strength, and the joy of our lives depends upon the way that these loads

are dealt with. Which of them ought to be carried, and which of them none of us should attempt to carry, is a question that ought to be examined. How to make our own loads the lighter, and how to relieve other people of their burdens, is another question to be carefully considered. Upon these questions a vast deal of heavenly light streams in through the triple window now opened before us.

I. The first of the texts to be looked at is this: "Every man shall bear his own burden." We are too apt to regard burden-bearing as something menial or degrading. But this is a great mistake. God has so ordered it that no station in life is exempt from its inevitable loads. Many years ago, during the days of the "old dispensation," I was visiting a hospitable planter on the Savannah River. He took me out to see a company of his negro slaves, who were carrying bags of rice on their heads to freight a vessel which was moored at the riverside. They were carrying their burdens, and cheering their task by chanting a wild negro melody. After he returned to his mansion, the planter said to me, "It is a tremendous responsibility to be the owner of a hundred human beings." There was his burden. Perhaps some of you merchants envy your bookkeepers or your porters who have only to carry on their tale of labor, and to receive their wages. They, in turn, may often

say, "What an easy time our employer has ; he performs no drudgery ; he sits in his counting-room, signs checks, and then rides home to his fine house in his carriage." Yet on your busy and often overworked brain depends the continuance of their salaries. For so has God wedded capital and labor together, and what God hath joined, let no demagogues tear asunder !

Some burdens are inseparably attached to us, and deliverance from them were as impossible as to exist without eating or sleeping. Every boy at school must task himself with words of one syllable at first, and so on, with advancing years, must advance into more difficult lessons. If he shoulders up the calf he will gain each year increasing strength, until in time he can carry the full-grown bullock. Every lot in life must answer to the roll-call of duty. There is no discharge in that war ; and behind every horseman sits dark-browed Care. Sorrow also is no respecter of persons. It puts aching heads under royal crowns, and aching hearts on beds of down and couches of rosewood. Perhaps, during your summer outings you may have seen some picturesque mansion reposing on its sunny lawns, and surrounded with its wealth of foliage ; and you have said to yourself, "Happy is the owner of that house ; I wish it were mine." Ah, my friend, the owner of that superb residence is only a man ; and where

man lives, sin dwells, and sorrow dwells likewise. We pastors find out that none of our flocks build walls high enough to shut out disease, disaster, or death ; and there is never a house without some “skeleton in a closet.” Every heart knoweth its own bitterness. As no one can take your toothache into his face, so no one can take your heartache into his bosom. This text of ours has manifold applications. As no one can feel the twinge of my pain—bodily or mental—so no one can do my work but myself. You may engage a dozen assistants for a busy pastor, but all combined cannot lift off an ounce of his responsibility ; the strain finally falls back upon his nerves and his conscience. The bodily infirmities that we all suffer, to a greater or less degree, are often a heavy clog. My beloved friend Spurgeon often hobbled in intense agony to that pulpit which he flooded with sunshine. Cheerful old Paul had his physical load to carry, and he exclaims, “We that are in this tabernacle [or tent] do groan, being burdened.” With what ? With a sense of guilt or dread of hell ? No ; that load had been left where we may leave ours, at the foot of Calvary’s cross. But the fleshly hut, in which Paul’s imperial soul was locked up, was scarred with the lash, and full of aches and thorns in the flesh. Yet under this burden of bodily pain, and of the “care of all the churches,” and of crosses that

galled the shoulder; the grand old hero marched on to glory, shouting! There is not a blood-bought heir of heaven in this assembly who ought not to shout as loud as he did.

A true Christian grows stronger by his loads. Train up your boy on confectioneries, and never lay fifty pounds weight on him, and the poor, flabby little creature will be all *pulp*. Give him some stiff tasks and heavy loads to carry, and he may have some chance of being yet a man. In that way God deals with His children. He knows that burthens will make them strong. So He says to His children, "Everyone shall bear his own burden. There is thy load, carry it; there is thy place, fill it; there is thy work, do it; and as thy day, so shall thy strength be." The route to heaven is not over a macadamized road with easy grades. It has many a "hill difficulty," where the climber goeth from running to walking, and from walking to a tough clambering on his hands and knees. Let us not murmur, or vainly ask for "elevators" to hoist us; for one, I have lived long enough in this world to thank God for difficulties. The grapple with them sinews our graces and gives us spiritual force. In God's school some hard lessons are to be learned; and there are no "elective studies." It is very pleasant to work out problems in addition and in multiplication; but when our Master puts us into a painful problem of sub-

traction—when the income is cut off, or the crib is emptied, or the staff is broken—then we cry out, “O God, let this cup pass from me.” It requires great grace to be able then to say, “Nevertheless, Father; not as we will, but as Thou wilt!” For the hardest lesson of all in this world is—*to let God have His way.*

The Master’s command to His disciples has evermore been, “Go work in my vineyard.” This is not merely for the crop to be raised there, but for the invigoration of our spiritual sinews and to utilize our powers. A work for every man, and every man to his work, is the law of honest discipleship. There is another like unto it, “Take up thy Cross and follow me.” Why? Because we are yet in a sin-cursed world, and the word *sin* and the word *cross* are twin brothers. Where sin is there must be an attendant cross—whether it be my own sin to plague me, or that of others to try my patience or to arouse my efforts to save them. There is no house room for crosses in heaven; and simply because sin has never entered those pearly portals. Here, in this world of sharp antagonisms, the crucial test is, “Whosoever doth not take up his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.”

Now, these are ultimate facts, verified by every Christian’s experience. The Captain of our salvation has ordered that each one of us

shall endure hardness as good soldiers—that everyone must shoulder his own weapons and bear his own brunt in the bivouac and the battle. And all this regimen is indispensable to the growth of the soul in spiritual force, and to the development of the grandest thing this side of heaven, and that is—pure, vigorous, and *Christlike character*. It is not to their credit, nor for the honor of their Master that some Christians seek to hide their own indolence or unbelief under that other injunction, “Cast thy burdens upon the Lord.” Every text in this book hath its own place and its own purpose. No truth overlaps or obscures or contradicts another. There are certain burdens that no fellow-creature can carry for us, and that our Lord and Saviour never offers to carry His imperative command is, “Every man shall bear his own burden;” and the object of this is that he may become *strong in the Lord*.

II. After this brief study of the first text, let us now look at the second, which does not contradict, but rather confirms it. “Bear ye one another’s burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ.” We have just seen how the carrying of certain loads gives us *strength*. But there are other loads which we can help our fellow-pilgrims to carry, and the object of that service is to teach us *sympathy*. Happily we have the motive for this brotherly service given in the text itself. We are thus to “ful-

fil the law of Christ." That law is love. Yes, Jesus Christ Himself is love. He so loved us that He bore our sins in His own body on the tree. He so loved the wandering sheep that He descended from the skies to seek for and to save the silly truant that was entangled in the thickets or foundering in the mire. And when he lays it on his shoulders—the clean bearing the unclean, the Holy bearing the unholy—He bringeth it back to the fold, "rejoicing." He is glad for the sake of the restored sheep, but still more for His own sake—love has its own ecstasy of reward. You will remember how our hearts were thrilled when Mr. Sankey first sang for us that exquisite paraphrase of the parable:

"There were ninety-and-nine that safely lay  
 In the shelter of the fold,  
 But one was out on the hills away,  
 Far off from the gates of gold.  
 Away on the mountains wild and bare,  
 Away from the tender Shepherd's care.

"But none of the ransomed ever knew  
 How deep were the waters crossed;  
 Nor how dark was the night that the Lord  
 passed through  
 Ere He found His sheep that was lost.  
 Out in the desert He heard its cry—  
 Sick and helpless, and ready to die.

"But all thro' the mountains, thunder-riven,  
 And up from the rocky steep,  
 There arose a glad cry to the gate of heav'n,  
 'Rejoice! I have found my sheep!'  
 And the angels echoed around the throne,  
 'Rejoice, for the Lord brings back His  
 own!'"

Brings back His own ! redeemed by His own precious blood for the joy set before Him ! If you and I, fellow-sinners, are ever landed safe among the ringing trumpets and the sounding harps in glory, it will be entirely because that loving Shepherd has brought back His own.

As Jesus Christ came to the rescue of the perishing, so He bids us hasten to the relief of the overloaded and the recovery of the fallen. This is His law of love. Yonder, for example, is a poor wretch who is reeling down to perdition under the weight of his own folly and sin. Sharp-eyed Selfishness says : "Good enough for him ; why was he such a fool as to drink ?" Jesus says : " Go pull that soul, for whom I have died, out of the fire !" That is sympathy in action. When the Good Samaritan found the bleeding Jew by the wayside, he did not insult the sufferer with the taunt, " You ought to have known better than to travel by this dangerous road alone." He takes up the burthen of the wounded body, and, when he reaches the inn, he slips the shilling into the keeper's hands, and delicately whispers, " If thou spendest more, when I come back again, I will repay thee." There spake the prince of gentlemen ; for true politeness is kindness of heart kindly expressed.

The law of Christian sympathy works in two directions ; either it helps our fellow-creatures to get rid of their burdens entirely, or, if fail-

ing in that, it helps them to carry the load more lightly. Yonder is a poor widow with more children than she can feed and clothe. Take one of those lads into your shop or warehouse, and let that widow's thanks sweeten your cup and soften your pillow. A youth comes to you from the country, friendless and seeking employment. Just as on a railway one inch at the switch determines whether the train shall move on its straight track or be shunted over an embankment, so a single sympathetic act of helpfulness to that youth may decide his whole future for weal or woe. The Lord makes some of His servants rich, or strong, or kind, in order to be His switch-tenders. Here are you, worshiping in a well manned and affluent church. Yonder is a feeble one struggling for existence. Divide your forces with them, and make both churches the richer; one by what it gives, and the other by what it gets.

As I have said already, there is one sense in which sorrow can only be borne by the sufferer himself; there is another in which that sorrow can be lightened by your tender sympathy. Bear ye one another's burdens. Sometimes a small lift is very timely. A single kind word, a little oil of sympathy on a sore spot, a message of condolence when crape hangs at the door-bell, a gift in the hour of need, an approving smile, all such things do help a fellow-

creature most wonderfully. It is to the reproach of us all that we do not oftener act the good Samaritan in little things.

Some of you may recall that beautiful incident narrated by our noble American missionary to the Orient, Miss Fidelia Fiske. She tells us that on a warm Sabbath afternoon she was seated on the earthen floor of her mission-chapel and feeling utterly exhausted. "Just then, as God would order it, a Syrian woman came and seated herself right behind me, so that I could lean on her, and she invited me to do so. I declined, but she drew me back and said, 'If you love me, lean hard.' Very refreshing was that support. Then came the Master's own voice, 'If you love me, *lean hard* ;' and I leaned on Him too, for He had preached to me through that poor woman. I was rested before the service was over ; then I spent an hour with the woman and, after sunset, rode six miles to my own home. I wondered that I was not weary that night, and I have rested ever since on those sweet words." They belonged to the choicest vocabulary of love. Many a mother has had the same thought as she pressed her infant to her bosom. More than one true-hearted husband, as he lifted the precious burthen from her couch—which he sadly found was growing lighter every day—has whispered into her ears, "My darling, if you love me, lean hard."

This beautiful "law of Christ" was the germinal principle from which sprang the primitive Christian Church. The power from on high which descended at Pentecost was essentially a love-power. Those unselfish men and women, who went forth from that upper room in Jerusalem, were burden-lifters in the name and in the strength of Him who had just borne the burden of human guilt in His bleeding body on the cross. The only genuine successors of the Apostles have been the load-lifters. Their creed and watchword have always been, "Unto him that loved us and loosed us from our sins by his blood ; to him be the glory and the dominion for ever and ever!" Every stream of Christian sympathy that has gladdened human hearts came from this divine fount-head in the heart of Jesus. All labors to lighten the overload of human guilt and misery and want —the enlightenment of the ignorant, the rightening of the wronged, the deliverance of the oppressed, the visitation of the sick, and comforting of the bereaved, the gospeling of the heathen and the whole magnificent enterprise of missions ; all these are the precious product of this principle "bear ye one another's burdens and *so fulfil the law of Christ.*" The most successful missionaries and ministers are those who come closest to human hearts. The secret of power with General Booth and his "Salvationists" is their personal sympathy

with the wretched and the wrecked. When the members of our churches become "sons of consolation" in the broadest sense of the word—bestowing not only their dollars but their time, their presence, and their heart-beats upon the unchristianized masses, we shall have a primitive and pentecostal revival. Pulpits speak only for an hour or two each week, and then only to those who occupy the pews before them; it is by *sermons in shoes* that the suffering and the sinning can only be reached. The need of the time is not for more geniuses in the pulpit, but for more personal consecration among Christians to this "law of Christ."

III. Let us push on now to the third and last of this beautiful triplet of texts. The first one taught self-help; "Every man shall bear his own burden." The object of it is to give us spiritual *strength*. The second text teaches brotherly help; "Bear ye one another's burdens." The object of it is to inspire *sympathy*. Of these three texts the third is the Kohinoor jewel; for it leads us up to the divine help: "Cast thy burden upon the Lord."

This passage has suffered at the hands of some mystics, who have volatilized it into a very thin and vaporous meaning. The Hebrew word translated "burden," really signifies that which is given to us, or that which is appointed to every man to bear. We must, there-

fore, understand the Psalmist to say—whatever thy God lays upon thee, thou must lay it upon the Lord. He has cast thy lot for thee. Then cast thy lot upon Him. But can this text be reconciled with the two others? Yes; quite easily. We are commanded to bear our own burdens, and this requires the resolute performance of our own duties. God will not release us from duty; but he will sustain us in the doing it. The load which is laid upon us will not crush us; for He will give us strength equal to our day. If other people wonder why and how we march along under the load without breaking down, our only answer is, "We put this load upon the strength which God put into us. His grace was sufficient to enable us to bear the burden." God's wonderful and gracious offer is to lighten our loads by putting Himself, as it were, into our souls, and underneath the loads. This is a supernatural process; and the whole walk of faith through life is the simple but sublime reliance upon an almighty arm that is never seen but always felt. This accounts for the fact that the word "trust" is the key-word of Old-Testament theology, and the word "believe" is the key-word in the New Testament. They both mean substantially the same thing. And when our Heavenly Father saith "Cast thy burden upon Me," and our loving Redeemer saith "Cast the load of thy sins upon Me,"

they expect us to take them at their word.

There is an universal and perpetual need for this tonic text.

On every side we meet overloaded people, and each one thinks his burden is the biggest. One is worried about his health, and another about his diminished income, and another about her sick child, and another about her children yet unconverted ; and so each man or woman, that has a worry of some sort, goes staggering along under it. In the meantime a loving and omnipotent Father says to every one of them: Cast thy burden upon the Lord and He shall sustain thee. As if this one offer were not enough, the Holy Spirit repeats it again in the New Testament : “Casting all your *anxieties* upon Him, for He careth for you.” This is the more accurate rendering in the Revised Version ; because the word “care” does not signify here wise forethought for the future, but that soul-harassing thing called “worry.” The reason given for rolling our worries over upon God is very tender and touching. “He careth for you” means that He takes an interest in you—He has you on His heart ! Beautiful and wonderful thought ! It is the same idea which the Psalmist had in his mind when he declares that the Lord telleth the number of the stars, and yet He healeth the broken in heart and bindeth up their wounds,

He is the one who says, "My child, don't carry that burden." The infinite Ruler of the universe, who is wise in counsel and wonderful in working; the God who guarded the infant Moses in his basket of rushes; who sent his messenger birds to Elijah by the brook Cherith; who quieted Daniel among the ravenous beasts and calmed Paul in the raging tempest—He it is who says to us, "Roll your anxieties over on Me, for I have you on my heart." Yet how many of us there are who hug our troubles and say to God, "No, we won't let anybody carry these troubles but ourselves." What fools we are! Just imagine a weary, foot-sore traveler tugging along with his pack in a hot July day. A wagon comes up, and the kind-hearted owner calls out, "Friend, you look tired. Toss that pack into my wagon." But the wayfarer, eying him suspiciously, mutters to himself, "Perhaps he wants to steal it," or else sullenly replies, "I am obliged to you, sir, but I can carry my own luggage." The folly of such conduct is equal to that of the man who should check his trunk through to Chicago and then run into the baggage-car every hour to see if his trunk is safe. We do not hesitate to trust our own valuable property to railway officials and expressmen, and laugh at the folly of those who refuse to do it; would it not be well then for us to "check through" all our

dearest interests as well as our cares? When we reach the door of Our Father's House we shall find that all our treasures worth keeping will be safe, and not one of them lost by the way.

I cannot close this discourse without reminding you that the mightiest burden that can ever weigh down a human soul is SIN! Everything else seems light by comparison. Poverty, friendlessness, reproach, sickness, bereavement, all can be, and have been, endured cheerfully; and the valley of the death-shade has often rung with songs of triumph. But who can stand up under that weight that has crushed myriads into hell? Who can bear through life, and on up to the judgment-seat, an evil conscience and a guilty, unpardoned soul?

Here comes in the sweetest and the sublimest truth in all the realm of divine revelation. Listen to it, all ye sin-burdened ones! If all the rest of our Bible were torn away from us, we could find enough to inspire our hope and to insure our heaven in this one glorious verse, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on HIM the iniquity of us all." Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, and with His stripes we are healed. *Jesus, the Divine Burden-bearer*, is the sublime and ineffably lovable figure that I now present before you. All the paths of the

gospel lead to Calvary. Does any one of you cry out, "Mine iniquities have gone over my head, and as a heavy burden, they are too heavy for me?" Listen to that matchless voice, "Come unto me, all you who are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest."

Oh, I pray for some practical and lasting fruits from these triple texts. I long to behold all of you lifted by this threefold cord out of your griefs and out of your guilt. Methinks I see some poor burdened heart pass out of yonder door saying :

"I lay my griefs on Jesus,  
My burdens and my cares ;  
He from the load releases,  
He all my sorrows shares."

There is another whose load is the heaviest of all ; for he came hither "condemned already" by his conscious guilt. The Holy Spirit has opened his eyes to behold the Lamb of God who taketh away sin ; and he has opened his heart to the Saviour. He will go homeward to-day singing this new song :

"I've laid my sins on Jesus,  
The spotless Lamb of God,  
He bears them all, and frees us  
From the accursed load.  
I've brought my guilt to Jesus,  
To wash my crimson stains  
White in His blood most precious  
Till not a stain remains !"

IV.

**THE RICH CHRISTIAN.**



## IV.

### THE RICH CHRISTIAN.

“Rich toward God.”—LUKE xii, 21.

“WHAT is he worth?” Used in its full significance, this would be the most pregnant, the most just, and the most comprehensive question that could be propounded in regard to any immortal being. When asked in the ordinary way, it simply means, How large are his estates? how much gold has he in his bank-vaults? And the ordinary answer would be, “The man is worth twenty thousand, or a hundred thousand dollars.” Then we can only say that he will have twenty thousand or a hundred thousand dollars to account for at the bar of God. Then will he be either the happy reaper of immortal joys when every well employed coin shall nod like a golden ear in the full sheaf of his heavenly harvest; or else he must meet thousands of scorpions to torment his soul through his dreary eternity of despair. Is a man worth uncounted thousands in bullion or bank stock, in real estate or rare commodities? Then he ought to be worth a vast deal to the community in which

he lives, and to the Church of Jesus Christ. He ought to be worth bread to the hungry, schooling to the ignorant, Bibles to the unevangelized, and mission schools to the heathen children at our doors. He ought to be rich toward God in the large and liberal employment of his high stewardship.

For not every rich man is "rich toward God." Else our Saviour would not have uttered the parable from which our text is taken. He probably had in his mind just such a person as I could easily find in a ten minutes' walk through this commercial city—a self-complacent Crœsus, shriveled in soul, but corpulent in purse ; a man in whom avarice has devoured all the other appetites of the heart, as voracious sharks gulp down whole shoals of smaller fish ; one who could call up his immortal part, and address it in the same spirit in which he would talk to a silken-haired pet spaniel, "Now, my little soul, thou hast much goods laid up for thyself!" Not for others, observe. Not for God. But for *thyself*. "Now eat, drink and be merry. Satiate thyself. Feast thy eyes on full barns, full board, full bags, full bank-vaults. Gloat over them. They are all thine. Never will I be so weak-headed as to be cheated out of them—never so weak-hearted as to squander them on foolish charities." "*Thou fool!*" thunders the voice of God above him—"thou fool, this

night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided ? ”

This terrible satire of divine indignation is not expended upon the subject of this parable because he was rich in earthly goods. The Bible has no controversy with men of wealth. It never discourages the acquisition of gold, as long as the heart owns the gold, and the gold does not own the heart. The anathema of the parable is not against riches, but against *selfishness*, the mammon-worship which de-thrones Jehovah. And by as much as this selfishness is the selfishness of wealth, by just so much is it the more abominable and hateful. For when God makes an individual worth tens of thousands, and he makes himself worth less than nothing to his Creator and his fellow-men, God will curse such selfishness with the most crushing condemnation. Even at the bar of final judgment, one test-question will be, in regard to you and to me, and to every man, “ How much is he worth—worth to his Saviour and the Saviour’s cause ? How much has he been worth to his fellow-men ? ” In that great day of decision I should like to stand up as the pastor of a rich church—exceeding rich in faith and good works. If so, you must begin now, with a holy covetousness, to lay up spiritual and eternal treasures. Let me point out to you a few

simple rules for becoming "rich toward God."

I. And, first, let me remind you that *every soul on earth is born poor*. There is no exemption from this hard lot. Whether in royal nurseries, where the heir to the throne is well-nigh smothered in down, or in the pauper's thatched hovel, every immortal soul begins its existence poor. Sin spares not a solitary child of Adam. Sin writes its moral poverty on every occupant of every cradle. As the emptiness of the purse makes one poor financially, so the entire emptiness of the heart as to all holy emotions, holy desires and purposes, constitutes our native moral poverty. Who would go to the ragged urchin in the Industrial School for a loan? Yet it would be quite as wise to expect a depraved heart to give forth what it has never yet possessed—one pure, holy emotion.

How, then, can any soul become rich toward God? He does not inherit spiritual wealth, but rather the entire and most pitiable want of it. He inherits guilt. He inherits evil passions. Noble faculties and capacities are his inheritance, but not one particle of native grace comes with them. The more gifted in intellect, the more dangerous will he become, if those mental powers are wholly uncontrolled by the law of God. Without grace, he is a guilty creature on earth and a lost creature through eternity.

He must begin, then, on that grace—on God's free gift to him through Christ. Just as a liberal father establishes his son in commercial business by furnishing him a certain sum as his capital, so (if we may thus speak) our heavenly Father gives the new heart as a Christian capital. This is the starting-point. As soon as converting grace enters the soul its condition changes. At that moment, by that act, the seeking sinner becomes the forgiven, the accepted, the adopted heir of God. And the religious principle, then implanted by the Holy Ghost, is the spiritual capital with which the new-made heir begins his stewardship. Sometimes this capital is furnished in childhood or in early youth, and then a long "threescore and ten" witnesses the growth of that soul into vast possessions. Sometimes a person begins late in life; and then, like those who mistake their secular callings and only get hold of the right occupation at forty, he seldom becomes a spiritual millionaire. In fact, he does not get far beyond his original capital. It is hard work to make a "first-class" Christian out of an aged sinner. Old habits of sin have become inveterate. The best soil of the heart has been worn out in growing enormous crops of tares. There is a want of spring and pliability in an old man's temperament; he does not readily adapt himself to new positions and new duties. As the merchants who have accumu-

lated the most gigantic fortunes are commonly those who began to be rich before thirty, so the richest Christians are usually to be found among the converts of the Bible-class room and the Sabbath school. Begin young, my friends, if you would attain to great riches. Those who are no longer young may still be saved if they will come heartily to Jesus; but I doubt if they often do much toward saving others. God reserves the highest reward to those who enlist the earliest, and serve the hardest and the longest.

II. In the second place, let me remind you that *he who would amass large wealth must not sit down content with his original capital.* He makes investments. He plants his gold in a well tilled farm, or sends it seaward in strong-bottomed ships, or sets it to spinning new fortunes in the factory. He must venture what he has, if he would gain more.

Even so in the spiritual world: that professor is but a lean, poverty-stricken starveling, who never gets beyond the infantile condition in which he stood for the first time at Christ's table. Such professors there be in every church. Their single talent is hidden in a napkin—a very small napkin. What God bestowed upon them at the time of conversion is all that they have now; if there has been any change, it has been rather a reduction than a growth. Such began small—they continue

smaller. They never were anything but rivulets, trickling with slender thread of water among the barren stones, at the mercy of every August drought, and well-nigh drunk up by every thirsty noonday sun. Year after year they trickle—trickle—trickle—until death dries them up, and nobody misses them. They watered nothing ; they refreshed nobody, and blessed no living thing. Earth is little the poorer for losing them ; heaven scarcely the richer for gaining them.

But a growing believer's course is like yonder river's—its birthplace some secluded fountain under the mossy rock. Cool and clear, it steers its modest path whithersoever God shall lead it, laughing evermore and leaping to its own silvery music. For long we lose sight of it. Then we meet it again, no longer a wayside brook, but a deep-voiced river beating against its banks—swelling up to kiss the marge of green meadows—winding around the highland's base—rolling on its majestic march until it spreads out into a hospitable bay, on whose placid bosom fleets ride at anchor, and in whose azure depths the banners of all nations are mirrored. Such is the outflow of a rich soul—every day widening in influence, every day deepening in experience, every day running purer and purer. To human eyes such believers may move more slowly as old age draws on. But it is because the volume of their graces is

increasing, and they are nearing the ocean of eternity. How these lives gladden the regions through which they pass ! How they mirror back the glory of Christ's gracious handiwork ! How they bear up human hopes, and spread themselves out like broad, patient rivers, to carry all burdens that are launched on their bosoms !

Yet such a glorious Christian career, so beautiful in its daily flow, and so beneficent in its results, is only the original grace of conversion employed at compound interest. This mighty river of holy influence is only the original fountain magnified. Behold the virtue of *accumulation* ! To this the apostle exhorted when he urged his brethren to "*grow in grace.*" To accumulate soul wealth for God is the purport of that apostolic injunction, "*Add to your faith virtue ; and to virtue knowledge ; and to knowledge temperance ; and to temperance patience ; and to patience godliness ; and to godliness brotherly kindness ; and to brotherly kindness charity.*" Brethren, I repeat and reinforce the exhortation : Grow in Grace. Expand. Absorb every down-pouring of heavenly influence. Catch every descending drop of spiritual blessing. Open your hearts to every stream of Bible knowledge. Be filled with the fullness of Christ. So shall ye be neither empty nor unfruitful, but "*always abounding in the work of the Lord.*"

III. This leads me, in the third place, to speak of the METHODS of spiritual wealth-getting. How shall a believer become "rich toward God?" We answer that the rules for securing success in secular affairs will apply to the advancement of the soul in grace. The real currency in commerce is metallic, the broad earth over. And the gold and silver which make up the basis of personal wealth, are the product of the miner's hard toil with sieve or with mattock. Now, the currency of God's kingdom is *truth*; and the Bible is the ore-bed. To every one of you this mine is open. He must be a blind or a careless miner who does not come out of this inexhaustible ore-bed with some new and massive "nugget" as the result of every hour's research. Do you consider every bank solvent whose vaults are the hiding-place for solid bullion, amply sufficient to meet its liabilities? So is he a solvent Christian whose secret soul is stored with gospel principles, all coined and stamped for daily use. Nor should any Christian ask credit any further than he can fully redeem his promises and professions by the ready money of consistent godly conduct.

To make a rich believer, something more than faith is needed. More, too, than Scriptural knowledge. There must be, also, *experience*. Ah, this is a costly possession! Nothing is bought so dear; and yet it is worth

all it costs us. This is a part of the soul's wealth that no one can purchase for us ; no dearest friend can make it over to us as a gift. We must "go and buy for ourselves," and exorbitant is the price we often pay for it.

There are sometimes rare and beautiful wares brought into the market that are invoiced at almost fabulous rates. Ignorant people wonder why they are priced so high. The simple reason is that they cost so much to procure. That luxurious article labeled £200 was procured by the adventurous hunter, who, at the hazard of his neck, brought down the wild mountain-goat, out of whose glossy hair the fabric was wrought. Yonder pearl that flashes on the brow of the bride is precious, because it was rescued from the great deep at the risk of the pearl-fisher's life, as he was lifted into the boat half dead, with the blood gushing from his nostrils. Yonder ermine, flung so carelessly over the proud beauty's shoulder, cost terrible battles with Polar ice and hurricane. All choicest things are reckoned the dearest. So is it, too, in Heaven's inventories. The universe of God has never witnessed aught to be reckoned in comparison with the redemption of a guilty world. That mighty ransom no such contemptible things as silver and gold could procure. Only by one price could the Church of God be redeemed from hell, and that, the

precious blood of the Lamb—the Lamb without blemish or spot—the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

And so it is that the best part of a Christian character is that which was procured at the sorest cost. Patience is a beautiful trait, but it is not worn oftenest by those who walk on life's sunny side in silver slippers. It is the product of dark nights of tempest, and of those days of adversity whose high noon is but a midnight. For “*the trial of your faith worketh patience.*” Purity of soul is like purity in gold, where the hottest fires turn out the most refined and precious metals from the crucible. Joseph found his crucible in an Egyptian prison ; but he came out thence with the soul of a virgin. Purity of character is often bought in this wicked city by the bitter price of a crust of bread eaten with a good conscience in an attic ; when a guilty connivance would have been rewarded with French satins and a harlot's sumptuous couch.

The knowledge of our own besetting sins is a knowledge we all crave. We imagine that we would be willing to pay liberally for the insight into our own hearts which shall reveal all our weak points, not knowing how soon some unexpected emergency might develop some foible or some vice of character hitherto unsuspected. But men have paid dearly for such discoveries. David paid for his self-

knowledge with the life of a darling child and a broken heart ; Hezekiah paid for his by the wearisome sufferings of a sick-chamber ; Peter for his by the bitter agonies in Pilate's garden. But the discoveries were worth all they cost. Among God's jewels, there is no brilliant which flashes with such luster as the tear of true penitence. Yet God only knoweth what heart-pressure, as in a vise,—what wringings and rendings of soul, what crushings of pride, and wrestlings of agony,—may have been needful in order to press out that jewel drop upon the cheek of the stubborn sufferer ! We have sometimes met with a person in social circles who possessed a peculiar gentleness and docility of character. As we came to know her better, we were amazed and charmed by her calm self-poise, and her heroic submissiveness to God under sudden shocks of calamity. We admired so beautiful a character. We envied its possessor. We coveted such a spirit for ourselves. Ah, we little knew at what fearful price of severe chastisements and bitter disappointments, of hopes desolated and expectations crossed, of faith put to the rack, and patience burned bright in seven-times-heated furnaces, all that meek loveliness of character had been gained ! So true is it, dear brethren, that he is the most rich toward God who is ready to toil the hardest, and to bear the most to gain his acquisition.

To be truly rich, all these graces of patience and purity and meekness and long-suffering are indispensable. Cost what they will, they must be attained. By prayer and by practice they must be sought after, and so sought as to secure them. He is a meager, unfinished, unripe, and unimpressive Christian who does not possess those peculiar graces which are only to be won by suffering and trial. Do not draw back from the possession of any spiritual treasure, I beseech you, from the dread of paying dearly for it. The worldling withholds no toil, no sacrifices that are needful to secure his covetous gains or honors. The merchant begrudges not the evenings spent away from his own fireside, if those extra hours over his ledgers will give but an extra dividend of profits. The sculptor counts not the long months wasted which see him with hammer and chisel pursuing the imprisoned figure which his keen eye detects within the block of Parian marble. And the children of light must carry into their service of Christ the same untiring ardor, the same zeal, and the same self-denial by which the children of the world win wealth and honor and emoluments. Oh, for a holy enthusiasm! a holy covetousness to become rich toward God!

IV. The fourth and last principle that I shall present is, that whoever would become rich in spiritual treasure must *give away bountifully*. This is the truest paradox in

Christian economy. He that saves for self only loses ; he that loses for Christ's sake is sure to save. Would you grow rich toward God ? Then learn to give. God loveth a cheerful giver. Nor do I limit this rule to the donation of the purse. The mere gift of gold is but a part of Christian benevolence, though by no means an unimportant part. I often wish that I were the possessor of the wealth of James Lenox or Frederick Marquand, provided that I had always, too, the wealth of heart-love to do good that those princely men had. But a rich *soul* can be always giving ; as the noonday sun overflows his golden urn of ceaseless radiance, and is yet none the poorer in warmth and glory when a whole universe has been lighted.

We must freely give of everything that we have freely received from the Lord. If we have the heart to pray, let us give of our prayers. No legacy that a rich father could have left me would compare in value with my widowed mother's prayers for me at the mercy-seat. You, that have acquired the wisdom which age and experience confer, can give those counsels which are apples of gold in baskets of silver to the young, the inexperienced, and the unfortunate. Give your personal labors, too, for Christ. Many a rich man seeks to compound with his conscience by bestowing bank-checks in lieu of his own presence in the mission school, the prayer-

meetings, or the abodes of suffering. Oh, man of wealth ! God gave thee that very leisure thou enjoyest in order to do the very work of charity which thy poorer, hard-toiling neighbor has no time to perform. Those that have not money, or counsel, or charitable deeds to bestow, can, at least, afford a godly example. And so a godly life may be, from first to last, all expenditure ; just as the Temple lamps consumed themselves away in giving light. But the life and the heart grow the fuller, the brighter, the stronger, the more they expend. What were rich-souled Christians given to the world for but to be reservoirs of blessings !

Happy is the man who can bring the very atmosphere of heaven with him whenever he approaches us ! who acts upon our spirits as the May breezes act upon the first shoots of the tulip and the violet ! He is a bountiful giver. He confers on us light ; he beams goodness into our souls ; he teaches us patience ; he showers on us brotherly kindness ; he illustrates for us faith ; he exhibits the true beauty of meekness ; he sheds hope by his very presence, and his unflinching bravery has often been an inspiration of valor to our failing hearts. Next to Christ himself, there is no blessing to the community like a Christlike Christian.

My dear reader, I covet for you the best gifts. Ask of God, who giveth liberally, that

ye all be rich—rich in faith, rich in good works, rich in revenues of joy, rich in heart holiness and the love of Jesus. And then, although your frame be wrapped in coarse raiment, your soul shall be enfolded in the shining garniture of Christ's righteousness. Though your dwelling-place be lowly, yet your heaven-seeking affection may be at home in the celestial courts before the throne of God and of the Lamb. Although your purse be scanty, your heart will be a palace whose chambers are filled with “all pleasant and all precious riches.” So shall you be made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

V.

**THE LITTLE COAT.**



## V.

### THE LITTLE COAT.

“His mother made him a little coat, and brought it to him from year to year.”—I SAMUEL ii, 19.

You may smile at this text. Well, it is but a little text, about a little garment that turned to dust many hundred years ago. We cannot always be discussing the great central and commanding themes, such as the Divine Attributes, Redemption, Regeneration, Immortality, and the Judgment to come. Life is largely made up of small things, and the small things are often very great in their influence upon character and destiny. This little text about a little lad’s “wee” coat has a connection with some of the most vital concerns of life, and is suggestive of many important truths—especially for the parents who are now before me.

In a parent’s eye there is no greater personage in this world than a little child. As the least of the planets floats nearest to the sun, so the baby of the household gets the central place in the home, and the warm chimney-corner in the heart. What a marvel of beauty—nothing short of a miracle—is a first-born child! With what

a glow of honest pride has many a young mother made for her infant treasure the tiny garment in which it was to be presented to the Lord, in the beautiful rite of baptism ! And in many a home there is carefully packed away—as above all price—the little white dress in which was baptized the darling one whom Jesus took homeward long ago.

There is a sweet touch of nature in the passage which I have chosen to-day. Away back in those distant lands and ages there was a young wife, whom the Lord remembered and gave to her a son. How overflowing was her joy ! (For Hannah was not like some heartless women of our day who regard children as a burden and a nuisance, and would rather risk child-murder than become mothers.) The grateful soul of Hannah broke forth in thanksgiving. “For this child I prayed, and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of Him. Therefore I have lent him to the Lord ; as long as he liveth, he shall be lent to the Lord.”

As soon as the infant Samuel was weaned, Hannah goes up to Shiloh, the sacred city, to perform the vow which she had promised in the days of her childless affliction. With a happy heart she makes her pilgrimage to the shrine of Jehovah—not only presenting her beloved boy to the Lord, but also offering several costly sacrifices. God had remembered

her sorrow, and had made her weep for joy. He had given her a son, and she consecrates him to the service of the Temple. He could not have been more than three or four years old when Hannah placed him under the care of Eli the high-priest, and he found his home in the dwelling-place of the Most High.

Moreover, his mother made him a little coat (or tunic), and brought it to him from year to year when she came up with Elkanah to offer their annual sacrifice. What sort of a garment could the little tunic have been ? Well, I cannot satisfy your curiosity ; but we may well believe that so sensible a mother as Hannah did not degrade her child into a doll, to be bedecked with foolish fineries. It must have been a modest and becoming garment which the godly mother made each year for the appareling of her child. I wish that I could say as much of the apparel which thousands of Christian parents now load upon the form of their children ; as if God did not make a child beautiful enough without the aid of elaborate fineries and expensive upholsterings. I tell you that this overdressing of the body strikes through into the mind and heart—poisoning the mind with affectation and with most unchildlike greed of admiration and vain-glory. How can a check be ever put upon the crop of fops and fashion-worshippers if children are trained into fopperies and fooleries from the

nursery? How can a child be instructed to frugality, humility, self-denial, or any sort of spiritual-mindedness while its free young graces are smothered under the artificial trappings of pride and extravagance? I entreat you, Christian parents, that, if you lend your children to the Lord, do not disfigure the sacred loan by turning an immortal being into a doll. That wise Hebrew mother made for her son such a garment as became his station; for Samuel was devoted to the service of God, and not to the "lust of the eye and the pride of life."

Going now more deeply into the spiritual suggestions of our text, let me remind you that clothing has a figurative signification in the Word of God. We are exhorted to be clothed with humility, and to keep our garments unspotted from the world. Christianity is likened to a vesture; and believers are commanded to "put on Christ," so that they need not be found naked or disfigured with the "filthy rags" of self-righteousness. As our dress is the part of us most visible to everybody, so should our Christ-likeness be visible at first sight to all whom we meet. This illustration of character by clothing extends even into the heavenly world; for we are told that "whosoever overcometh shall be clothed in white raiment," and the saints shall be attired in robes that have been washed to spotless

purity in the blood of the atoning Lamb of God.

Nor is it a mere pulpit pun that the very word "habit" is employed to signify both the dress of the body and the moral tendency and disposition of the mind. We parents clothe our children in both senses of the word. We provide the raiment for their bodies, and, in no small degree, we provide the habits of their thought and conduct. We make for them coats that will last—which no moth can eat or time deface—coats which they may never outgrow as long as life endures. Mothers! the Creator puts into your hands an unclothed spirit, as well as an unclothed body. You make a garment for the one; and in many a home there is hardly a rest for your busy needles through all the year. But shall the mind—the immortal spirit—be left naked, or be compelled to pick up at random its habits of thinking and acting? This were impossible. Our children will put on our ways and our habits in spite of us. Our character streams into our children, entering through their eyes and ears, and every faculty of observation. What they see us do, they will do; what they hear from us lodges in their memory, and, like seeds dropped from a parent stock, will come up in their conduct, for good or evil. We are forming their habits; and, in the primary school of home, we are educating them every

hour. Upon their plastic, susceptible minds we are printing constantly the impressions which come out in *character!* No photographic plate is so sensitive to the images which lodge upon it as are the receptive minds of our children, to whatever they are seeing or hearing. The sagacious Dr. Bushnell has happily said that "every sentiment which looks into the little eyes looks back out of the eyes, and plays in miniature on the countenance. The tear that steals down a mother's cheek gathers the little face into a responsive sadness. A fright in the mother's face will frighten the child. Our irritations irritate them; our dissimulations make them tricky and deceitful." If a boy is handled harshly, and is thumped or jerked into obedience, he will probably turn out a sulky, obstinate, and irritable creature—just what our impetuous impatience made him. If malicious gossip, or scandal, sour our talk at the table or fireside, our children's "teeth will be set on edge." Give your boy a dollar for the toy shop or the place of amusement, and only a dime for the Lord's contribution box, and you will teach him that self-indulgence is ten times more important than charity. If we live for the world, it is very likely that our children may die of the world. If we set our affections on things above, and seek first the kingdom of God, for ourselves and for them, we may reasonably

hope to win them into the upward pathway we are treading.

And thus, my fellow-parents, are we making "little coats" for the younger children, and the larger coats for the older ones, all the while. When they go away from home they will wear the habits which we have put upon them. We really send ourselves to the boarding school or the college in the bearing and breeding which our sons and daughters carry thither. Our older children are wearing now the coats of character which we cut out for them ten or twenty years ago. How do we like their dress? Is it after the good Bible pattern? Mr. A. used to think it a genteel and hospitable practice to set the decanter on his table; and his sons learned to love the wine too well. They have practiced on these home lessons until their "redness of eyes" and thickness of tongue prove their too great familiarity with the bottle. How does he like the coat they wear?

Brother B. thought that, after all, the theater was not so perilous a place as his pastor or other Puritanic people had pictured it. So instead of providing unexceptionable recreations for his children he gave them *carte blanche* for the playhouse, with all its lascivious attractions and salacious seductions. Some of them have gone too often for their purity of heart or peace of conscience. Can he now pull off the "habit" which he permitted or encour-

aged them to put on ? Mrs. C. insisted that the assembly-room was the best place to acquire gracefulness of carriage and elegance of deportment. Her daughters learned everything that the ballroom teaches—even to that style of dance that is “the last sigh of expiring modesty.” As she looks now upon their gay apparel of fashion and frivolity, so different from the “ornament of a meek and quiet spirit,” her motherly eyes are sometimes moistened at the sight.

Here is a father who spends his Sabbath over his cigar and his Sunday morning newspaper and his business letters. His sons put on the coat and wear it to their soul’s peril ; they are not likely to lay it aside unless the grace of God shall open their eyes to the solemn fact that to lose the Sabbath is to lose the soul ! In one family the prevailing topic is “money—money” ; in another dress and parade ; in another sporting ; in another music and fine art ; in another the tone of daily conversation is toward the best things worth living for ; and the pattern which the parents set the children copy. How will all these “habits” of thought and conduct look when they are subjected to the test of experience and the searching light of the day of judgment ? Ah, these mind garments, which beautify and adorn, or else disfigure and deprave, are very apt to last for a lifetime ; they will be worn by our off-

spring long after many of us have turned to dust. They will be garments of light and loveliness, or else of shame and sorrow.

II. Do not imagine, therefore, that the "little coat" is worthy of but slight attention. The sum of life is made up of little things. They determine character and often decide our destiny. As the peasant's coarse frock and the monarch's robe are both made up of many small threads woven together, so is the garment of character woven out of the innumerable thoughts and words and deeds of each person's daily existence. It is in the little things that Bible piety makes itself most winsome; and the mischief wrought by inconsistent Christians arises from the indulgence of petty sins that are as destructive as moths upon the garment. Dr. Maclaren pithily says that "white ants pick a carcass clean sooner than a lion will." I fear that you and I are often *great sinners in little things*. The little meannesses of word and look, the irritations of temper, the small duplicities of speech, the "white lies" that are only whitewashed, the small affronts and petty spites, the thoughtless neglect of other people's welfare, and the paltry excuses by which we strive to excuse ourselves from painful duty—all these make up an awful aggregate of sin. A snowflake is a tiny thing, that might melt in an infant's hand. But enough of these may be heaped up by a blizzard on a railway track

to stall the most powerful engine and its train. So is it the aggregate amount of inconsistent acts and neglects of duty that impair the influence of the individual Christian; they may accumulate into snow-banks that block up revivals and bring a whole Church to a standstill. No sin is a trifle; no sin can be safely allowed to get headway. "Let that worm alone, and it will kill your tree" was said once to a gardener in a nobleman's park. Sure enough; the gardener neglected the little borer, and the next year's yellow leaves showed the slow assassination of the tree.

On the other hand, it is the sum total of daily good deeds that make up the "beauty of holiness." The richest crops of grace spring from tiny seeds—especially when they have been watered by prayer.

Let no one despise the day of small things. The noblest Christian lives often have their origin in some faithful word spoken in love, or in the reading of a tract, or in some small occurrence, or in a single resolution to break with some besetting sin. One sentence seems to have brought the ardent Peter and the beloved John to their decision of discipleship. One sentence converted the jailer of Philippi. The outcome of those few words has been felt in the spiritual history of thousands of others since that day. Paul little knew how many souls, in all time, he was addressing when he

said to the frightened jailer, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." In fact, nobody ever knows how much good he is doing when he does just one good thing.

A word of praise from his mother made Benjamin West a painter and President of the Royal Academy. A kind sentence or two of commendation, bestowed in a short talk in a prayer-meeting, led me to enter the sacred ministry. From that incident I learned never to underrate the influence of a few words spoken at a critical moment.

A godly wife told her husband that she "trembled for him"; that single sentence spoken in love sent him trembling to the cross. Dr. Payson, of Portland, once asked a group of young men to let him read to them a hymn; when it was ended they were all in tears. The Divine Spirit was in that tender voice. Harlan Page, reared like his Master to the humble trade of a carpenter, became a marvelously successful winner of souls to Christ by uttering a few "words in season" with an emphasis of love that penetrated to the core.

That noble Boanerges of the Western New York pulpit, Dr. Wisner, of Ithaca, said that he stopped, on a hot summer day, at a farmhouse for a glass of water. The farmer's daughter handed him the refreshing draught, and he repaid her by a kind, tender word about Jesus as the water of life. Several

years afterward a middle-aged woman recognized him on the deck of a steamboat, and thanked him for the few plain faithful words which led her to Christ. It is a sin and a shame that we Christians let slip so many opportunities to drop a word of truth through an open ear into an open soul. Grant that many a truth thus dropped has not sprouted; neither has every sermon preached been the means of converting a soul. But the awaking power of a discourse has often laid in a single point pressed home. It is the tip of the arrow that penetrates the "joints of the harness."

The great lesson in the saving of souls is never to "despise the day of small things," never to lose an opportunity, and never to underrate the power of a single truth spoken in love. Revivals in a church commonly start in one or two hearts. The first revival in the little church among whom my own early ministry was spent began in the heart of a little girl. Her few words awakened one woman, and that woman came at once to me, and proposed special meetings; they were worth more to me than any year in a theological seminary.

I might multiply these illustrations of the greatness of the littles; for nothing is small that has God's Spirit in it and working through it. In conclusion, I would impress

once more upon the hearts of all parents the prodigious importance of all those numberless words and deeds by which they weave those garments of character that shall be worn long after they are in their silent sepulchers. No office is comparable to that of parentage; no trust is so sacred as that of an immortal spirit in the plastic period of childhood. When the Creator lays a newborn babe in the arms of its parents, He says to them, "Take this child and nurse it for Me and I will give thee thy wages." The answer of gratitude and faith ought to be—O God, Thou hast put Thy noblest work into our hands. We accept the precious trust. We will shelter this young life under thy mercy seat. We will nurse this soul in its infancy with the sincere milk of truth, that in after years it may bear strong meat, for strong service of God and righteousness. Help us to order our own lives in harmony with Thee, so that this young life may reflect Thine image in reflecting ours!

To such conscientious fidelity God offers the only wages that can satisfy the claims of love. He pays the heart's claim in the heart's own coin. Faithful, painstaking, prayerful Hannah found her rich reward in the sight of Samuel's after-career as Israel's upright Judge. Timothy's "little coat" outlasted his mother Eunice. The mother of the Wesleys was repaid for all her patient, loving discipline when

her sons reared the world-wide tabernacle for Methodism. God never breaks His covenant with those who fulfill their covenants to Him.

Fathers, mothers ! we are weaving the habits of our children every hour. We do it, as clothes are fashioned, stitch by stitch ; and most of all by the unconscious influence of example. The estate which we can bequeath to them may be small. We may not all be able to afford them the costly education of great schools or universities. But day by day we can be patiently weaving for them that garment of godliness that shall, by divine grace, grow brighter and fairer until they shall walk in shining apparel before the throne of God.

VI.

THE SERPENT IN THE WALL.



## VI.

### THE SERPENT IN THE WALL.

“ Whoso breaketh through a fence, a serpent shall bite him.”—*ECCLESIASTES* x, 8 (Revised Edition).

OLD TESTAMENT scholars are agreed that the reference in this verse is not to a hedge, or a frail fence of wood, but to a stone wall. It was the custom in Palestine to surround vineyards with a wall of loose stones, and these were a favorite haunt of snakes. In the book of Amos we read of a man’s “ leaning his hand on a wall, and a serpent bit him.” Isaiah also speaks of the arrow-snake making her nest among piles of stones. The text is one of a series which show the terrible risks which people run when they attempt to do certain things. The idea of this pungent passage is that if anyone undertook to break through the inclosure of his neighbor’s vineyard he might encounter a sly policeman in the shape of a snake ; and the bite of the snake would be deadly poison ! This is only a picturesque way of putting it that the way of transgressors is hard, and the wages of sin is death.

Human life is not an open prairie, over

which everybody may roam at will and do as he likes. Our heavenly Father loves us too well to allow us to follow the devices and desires of our own depraved hearts. He has therefore fenced us round with His inspired and infallible Word ; and some of the most vital portions of that word are in the form of commandments. “Thou shalt” and “thou shalt not” are planted all along our pathway, to define the boundaries between right and wrong—between what we may do, and what we must never do. As long as we keep within the boundaries that God has fixed, we dwell in safety ; we enjoy that true liberty which consists in the possibility of duty. To our great satisfaction, we find that the law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul ; the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart ; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes ; and the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever.

God never takes down his fences, nor does he ever lower them by a hand-breadth. Churches may revise their Confession of Faith as often as they choose, but the Almighty never allows His laws to be revised—or repealed. Some people seem to imagine that Sinai is extinct. Certain pulpits appear to be pitched at such a distance from that sublime mountain that its flaming peak is no longer visible, and its righteous thunders against sin

are no longer audible. By these rose-water prophets of smooth things, the theology of law is voted obsolete and barbarous ; the world is to be tamed and sanctified entirely by a theology of love. They preach a one-sided God—all mercy and no justice—with one-half of His glorious attributes under total eclipse. Even sinners are not to be warned and entreated with tears to flee from the wrath to come. They are rather to be coaxed into holiness by a magical process which makes nothing of repentance, and simply requires a “faith” which costs no more labor or self-denial than the lift of a finger. This shallow system may produce long rolls of “converts,” but it does not produce solid, subsoiled Christians. Sinai is not an extinct mountain in Bible theology. Not one jot of its holy law has been lowered or repealed. In one very vital sense no Christian is “free from the law.” It would not be a “happy condition” for him if he were so, any more than it would be a happy condition for New York or Brooklyn to disband their police and to let loose their criminals into the streets. So far from being a kindness, it would be eventual cruelty to any man, or to any community to place them beyond the reach and the just penalties of divine law. This is especially an unfortunate time in which to preach a limberbacked theology which has no stiffening of the word “*ought*” in its fiber, and which seeks

to conceal the fact that there is a serpent of *retribution* lurking behind God's walls. Society will never be regenerated with cologne water. We need more of the sacred authority of law in our homes, more enforcement of law in the commonwealth, more reverence for God's law in our hearts, more law-preaching in our pulpits, and more "law-work" in the conversion of souls who can represent and serve Jesus Christ by keeping His commandments. The very essence of sin is—breaking down, or breaking through God's fences. Whoso attempts it will soon find that there is a serpent there that will sting him.

Let me bring this pungent text from a general statement to some special application. It is full of wholesome suggestions to the young, and I would advise every young man to copy it into his memorandum book. "Why preach so often to the young?" Are counsels and discourses to them especially needed because they are worse than those who are of older growth? Nay, verily; for in the biographies of Holy Scripture many of the most flagrant offenses, such as the drunkenness of Noah, the lecherous deeds of Lot and David, the criminal parental conduct of Eli, and the sins of Solomon were all committed by men advanced in life. No indictments recorded against youth could be worse than these. But the primal object of all preaching and teaching is *prevention* of sin.

A faithful warning wisely heeded by the young may save them from the bitter experiences of corrupted character, or a life hopelessly wrecked. A buoy well placed in the channel, a signal lamp well lighted, are worth more than all the life-boats that may be launched when it is too late. Youth, also, is the period of ardent impulses and venturous risks. Commonly, it is stronger at the engine than it is at the air-brakes. It is immensely important, therefore, to prevent the young from attempting to break through God's fences, or even to loosen a stone in His wisely ordained walls.

Let us take, for example, the most frequent and the most familiar case—the temptation to tamper with intoxicants. An ounce of prevention is worth a ton of attempted cure. The Creator has built up His solid barricades against alcoholic drinks, that antedate all statutes of "Prohibition"; with the Almighty's statutes no human legislature can recklessly intermeddle with impunity; just as soon attempt to repeal the law of gravitation. In the solid wall of Total Abstinence are certain immutable principles founded on the constitution of the human body and on the inherent qualities of all intoxicants. Our bodies were created to be temples of the Holy Spirit, and never to be degraded into dens of debauchery. We are commanded to glorify God in the body, and every Christian is exhorted to preserve it, as

well as the soul and spirit, "blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." What are the laws which God has written on the human frame in regard to alcoholic stimulants? Every stone in the solid wall of restriction against such stimulants bears some incontrovertible truth inscribed thereon, and each truth is confirmed by experience. Let us pick up a few of these, and read on them the sufficient reasons why every young person should rigidly resolve never to touch any intoxicating drinks except on those rare occasions when a wise physician may prescribe them as a medicine. Even then they often cover up more than they cure.

I. The first reason is that no healthy human body requires alcohol, and the best work of the brain and of the limb is done without it. Alcohol stimulates, but it neither feeds nor strengthens. So far from being a true food, it interferes with alimentation. It absolutely lessens the muscular power. The young athletes in collegiate boat clubs, when under training for regatta races, are not allowed to use alcoholics. A famous pugilist once said: "When I have *business* on hand, there is nothing like cold water and the dumb-bells." I once asked a celebrated pedestrian what beverage he drank during a walk of a thousand miles for a wager. He replied that he drank nothing but water or cold tea, and that if he

had even drank a glass of wine, he would have lost his race. He found that alcoholic liquors disturbed and wasted his vital forces. Whatever is gained by the first spur given by the alcohol is more than lost by the reaction that follows it.

II. Every glass of wine that contains a considerable amount of alcohol, and every glass of brandy, is an irritant. Our system recognizes the presence of an enemy, and tries to throw off and expel the drink as an intruder. Thousands of people call for liquors in the restaurants, or provide them on their tables with the mistaken idea that they promote digestion. Some persons cling to this delusion long after the alcohol has burned out the coats of their stomachs. Instead of helping digestion, the liquor hinders it; instead of warming, it increases the tendency to freeze, as has been proven by Arctic explorers over and over again. Dr. Livingstone, the heroic African missionary, was a physician himself, and he testified that he "could stand any and every hardship best by using water, and water only." Sailors and soldiers can endure hard fights in tempests or on battlefields better with hot coffee than with any amount of grog. I have naturally a rather frail system, but I have stood nearly fifty years of hard work, with plenty of sound sleep, and not a drop of alcoholic stimulant.

III. A third reason for avoiding intoxicants is

that they have a most dangerous affinity for the brain. Some poisonous drugs have an affinity for the heart, and others for the spine. A glass of strong wine or brandy makes for the brain as a hound makes for the deer in the forest. When the alcohol reaches the brain it overturns the throne of the reason, and transforms the man into the fool or the maniac. Like the shot in a naval battle which hits "between wind and water," the alcoholic death-shot strikes where the mind and the body—the mortal and the immortal—meet together; and in innumerable instances it has the power to "cast both soul and body into hell." No human brain is proof against alcohol. The intellectual giant and the poor idiot are alike struck down by its stealthy stiletto bite. Remember, also, that every saloon is a den of rattlesnakes.

IV. No one is absolutely safe who tampers with an intoxicant. "Wine is a mocker, and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise." Not only the sting of the serpent, but the subtlety of the serpent is in it. The deception lies in the fact that the habit of drinking will become confirmed before you suspect that it is enslaving you. Every glass of liquor increases the desire for another glass. A loaf of bread, a dish of beef, a draught of milk, satisfy hunger; they do not breed a ravenous appetite. This fact makes it so difficult

to use wine or brandy without running into excess. A habit of drinking is formed and confirmed before the drinker is aware. A famous Presbyterian minister, long years ago, used port wine to make him preach more effectively, and the stealthy ally overmastered him at length in the pulpit, and he was led home drunk and disgraced! He reformed, but it was only by the most rigid pledge and practice of teetotalism. Men often say that alcoholic beverages are "good creatures of God"; so far from that, God's *law against alcohol* is written on every human body in this fact, that alcohol arouses a depraved appetite that demands more and more of the poison.

You may say: "Everyone who drinks liquors does not become a sot." Very true, but every sot drinks liquors; and not one in a million ever expected to become a sot when he began with his champagne or his sherry. Will you run the risk? I would not. The two reasons why I am a teetotaler are that I dare not trust myself, and I dare not tempt others by my example. The most deplorable wrecks are those of men or women who at the outset considered themselves perfectly strong and invulnerable. Nothing from the pen of Dickens can surpass a heartrending letter which I received from a cultured gentleman (then in an almshouse), who declared that he traced all the misery of his life directly to the "first glass he

ever drank at the N—— House, in the capital of Ohio." First glasses have peopled hell! With whatever odds in your favor, will you run the fearful hazard? Then stop before you begin.

All these divine laws against intoxicants inscribed upon the human system are re-enforced by that inspired warning from God's Word which blazes, as in letters of fire, on the forefront of this wall of Abstinence. "Look thou not upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth its color in the cup, when it goeth down smoothly; at the last it *biteth like a serpent* and *stingeth like an adder.*" At the *last!* But who can tell when that "last" shall ever end? When will the victim's last cry of remorse be heard, or the last horror seize upon his soul?

In spite of all these warnings from God's Word, and from bitter human experience, millions of young men venture to break through this fence, with the reckless hope that they will dodge the deadly adder. Let but the poison of that serpent enter into the blood and the globules of the brain, and it becomes a desperate battle for life; and where the grace of God gives one Gough the victory, a multitude of the fence-breakers die of the serpent's venomous bite. I entreat you, never loosen a pebble from that wall of total abstinence!

What is true of intoxicating beverages is

equally true in regard to indulgence of all the sensual appetites. The Creator has built a solid barrier of chastity ; everything beyond that wall, whether it be the lustful look or the wanton wish, is sin. It is vastly easier to keep clean than it is to wash off the impurities from a mind once polluted. No man or woman, young or old, can venture to dislodge a single stone from the wall of purity, but out darts the serpent ! Upon that inclosure the divine hand has written the solemn admonition, "Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned ? can he walk upon hot coals and his feet not be scorched ?"

God's Holy Word reaches to every domain of human life, and its precepts are the best manual for the merchant or the tradesman in every department of business. The Golden Rule is the basis on which is reared the solid wall of commercial integrity ; it is built by the plumb line that allows no deviation, by a single inch, from the absolute right. Provide things honest in the sight of all men ; he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much ; these are the rules that are written with a pen of iron, and graven with the point of a diamond. The divine law never recognizes honesty as a "policy," but evermore as a principle. As human life is a constant commentary on the Bible, we discover every day a most melancholy uniformity in the public disclosures of

dishonesty. The newspaper announcements of defalcations and bank-plunderings and embezzlements of trust funds all read alike. They all had the same beginning. The cashier, the clerk, the trustee, commenced his criminal career by picking out the mortar between the stones in God's wall of honesty. He promised himself that he would replace the stone which he was moving ; and he deluded himself with the hope that, after he got through the wall, he could slip back again without being detected. But the serpent was too quick for him. Before he knew it, the viper's fang had fastened itself upon his treacherous hand. As the first glass makes the drunkard, so the first dishonest dime makes the knave. In every counting room and bank, in every mart of exchange and place of traffic, ought to be written up the Eighth Commandment and the Golden Rule ; and, underneath them, the pithy proverb, "Whoso breaketh through this fence, a serpent shall sting him."

There are two sorts of fences that I must briefly allude to before closing. One is the inclosure that every wise parent should build around his own household. There is no such school of Bible religion in the land as a well-guarded, God-fearing home. There stands the domestic altar. There is exercised the influence that molds character from the cradle to the judgment seat. Such a home on earth

is commonly the surest preparation for the Home eternal in the heavens. Of this "church in the house" the parents are the ordained pastors. To train up a family wisely for the Lord requires more "gumption" than to write a book, and more grace than to preach a sermon. The ruling well of a household, requires, however, something more than that it be inclosed within certain sharp pickets of prohibition. Example is more potent than precept. The daily example of father and mother, and the whole pervading atmosphere of the house, ought to be a beneficent barrier strong enough to shut *in*, and also to shut *out*. We instruct our children more by what we *are* than by what we say to them; we restrain them the most when we restrain ourselves from evil courses. It has been wittily said that the "true time for a mother to begin the instruction of her child is twenty years before the child is born." Home is neither to be a high-walled penitentiary nor an unfenced pleasure-ground. Bible precepts may wall our domestic inclosures around to make them safe, but *love* must keep the atmosphere inside warm and winsome. When a son or daughter does break through such fences of loving parental authority, they are sure, sooner or later, to feel the viper's sting. The parable of the Prodigal Son is the sad story of a fence-breaker. It is repeated constantly in these

days ; but not every transgressor sets his face again homeward, nor has everyone such a forgiving father to extract the poison of the serpent's bite.

What the home is to the child, the Church of Christ is, or ought to be, to its every member. Its Divine Founder intended it to be a fold—a fold for both the old and the young. Nor ought the lambs to be shut out in the cold until they are hardy enough to stand the sharp weather. Whoever comes *into* the fold must also come *out* from the world and be separate.

“Be ye not conformed to this world, but be ye *transfigured* by the renewing of your mind,” is the inscription which gleams clearly over the portal. The walls of every Christian church are intended to mark a distinct separation from the customs and the spirit of the outlying world. Christ’s pure and holy commandments are inscribed on every stone. Within that fold are safety, peace, and growth in godliness ; outside of it prowls the wolf. To every Christian who has ever entered the inclosure of Christ’s redeeming love, and has vowed fidelity to his Master, comes this tenderly solemn warning : “Whoso breaketh through this wall, the serpent shall sting him.”

VII.

THE JOURNEY OF A DAY.



## VII.

### THE JOURNEY OF A DAY.

"I pray Thee, send me good speed this day."—GENESIS xxiv, 12.

IN those early patriarchal times God and His people seemed to live very near together and to hold very close personal intercourse. Their faith was as simple as their style of living. Abraham often conversed with God as one of our children converses with father or mother, on terms of filial and yet familiar affection. Eliezer, the steward of Abraham, addresses Jehovah in the same direct, though reverent manner.

The story from which our text is taken gives us a charming picture of the pastoral life of the Orient in those early times. Abraham sends Eliezer, the "eldest servant of his house," to Mesopotamia on a search for a wife unto his son Isaac. Eliezer sets off with his caravan of camels, and soon reaches the city of Nahor, near which resides Bethuel, who was a kinsman of Abraham. The caravan halts beside a well in the vicinity of the town. With straightforward directness Eliezer

offers up this prayer: "O Lord God of my master Abraham, I pray Thee *send me good speed this day*, and show kindness unto my master Abraham. Behold, I stand here by the well of water; and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water. And let it come to pass that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also; let the same be she that Thou hast appointed for Thy servant Isaac, and thereby shall I know that Thou hast showed kindness unto my master." The speedy appearance of the beautiful Rebekah, with her pitcher upon her shoulder, attested the answer which Eliezer sought for his petition.

It is not my custom to use passages of Holy Writ as mottoes for my discourses; but I shall do so on this occasion. My theme is the *Journey of a Day*, and how, by God's blessing, to make good speed upward and heavenward through every hour. Life is frequently presented as a journey or a pilgrimage; and John Bunyan was only following the line of Scriptural suggestion when he conceived the plan of his immortal allegory. The actual journey of human life is subdivided into several stages. Of these a day is the most visible and definite, for it is measured by the motion of our globe on its axis. A person of the average

age (thirty years) sees about eleven thousand days ; a veteran of four score sees about thirty thousand. In ordinary phrase we apply the word "day" to those hours of the twenty-four which are marked by sunlight. The period we call "night" is the bivouac after the march ; and the hours of sleep are the blank leaves in the diary of life.

After a few hours of unconscious slumber the rosy finger of the morning touches us, as the Divine Restorer touched the motionless form of Jairus' daughter, and saith to us, *Arise!* In an instant the wheels of conscious activity are set in motion, and we leap up from that temporary tomb, our bed. Was yesterday a sick day ? Sleep, like a good doctor, may have made us well. Was yesterday a sad day ? Sleep has kindly soothed the agitated nerves. Was it (like too many of its predecessors) a lost day ? Then our merciful Father puts us on a new probation, and gives us a chance to save this newborn day for Him and for His holy purposes of our existence.

Do we lose the morning either by over-sleep or indolence or aimlessness ? Then we commonly lose the day. One hour of the morning is worth two or three at the sun-setting. The best hours for study, for invention, or for labor are the first hours after mind and body have their resurrection from the couch of slumber. Napoleon, who made time a great factor in all

his successes, seized the early dawn. The master of modern fiction wrote nearly all his "Waverley" romances while his guests were sleeping. The numerous commentaries of good Albert Barnes are monuments to early rising; they attest how much a man may accomplish who gets at his work by five o'clock in the morning. To the student, the artist, the merchant, the manual-laborer, the most useful hours are reached before the sun climbs to the meridian. I am well aware that a vast deal of traditional nonsense has come down to us about the "midnight lamp." But those who use the midnight lamp, for either mental toil or sensual dissipations, are very apt to burn their own lamp of life out the soonest. Make it a rule, then, that he who would begin the day aright must seize and save its earliest hours. How often do we see some poor dilatory fellow rushing in blundering haste through the whole day in vain pursuit after the time he lost in the morning!

Every day should be commenced with God and upon the knees. "In the morning will I direct my prayer unto Thee, and will look up," said the man after God's own heart. He begins the day unwisely who leaves his chamber without a secret conference with his heavenly Friend. The true Christian goes to his closet both for his panoply and his "rations" for the day's march and its inevitable conflicts. As

the Oriental traveler sets out for the sultry journey by loading up his camel under the palm tree's shade, and by filling his flagons from the cool fountain that sparkles at its roots, so doth God's wayfarer draw his fresh supplies from the unexhausted spring. Morning is the golden time for devotion. The mercies of the night provoke to thankfulness. The buoyant heart, that is in love with God, makes its earliest flight—like the lark—toward the gates of heaven. Gratitude, faith, dependent trust, all prompt to early interviews with Him, who, never slumbering Himself, waits on His throne for our morning orisons. We all remember Bunyan's beautiful description of his Pilgrim's lodging overnight in the "Chamber of Peace" which looked toward the sun-rising, and at daybreak he "awoke and sang." If stony Egyptian "Memnon" made music when the first rays kindled on his flinty brow, a devout heart should not be mute when God causes the outgoings of his mornings to rejoice.

No pressure of business or household duties should crowd out prayer. An eminent Christian merchant told me that it was his rule to secure a good quiet half-hour in his chamber on his knees and over his Bible before he met his family ; and then he went into his business—as Moses came down from the mount—with his face shining. Doctor Arnold, of Rugby, had a

favorite morning hymn, which opens with these stirring lines :

“Come, my soul, thou must be waking ;  
Now is breaking  
O'er the earth another day.  
Come to Him who made this splendor ;  
See thou render  
All thy feeble powers can pay.”

• Closet devotions are the fit precursor to household worship. Family religion underlies the commonwealth and the Church. No Christian government—no healthy public conscience—no Bible philanthropies—no wholesome church life can exist without being rooted beneath the hearthstone and the family altar. The glory and defense of dear old Scotland are found in those scenes of ingle-side worship which Burns has so finely pictured :

“From scenes like these old Scotia's grandeur springs,  
That makes her loved at home, revered abroad.”

No prelude to the day is so fitting, so impressive, and so potent in its influence as the union of household hearts around the throne of grace. Family worship is a strong seam well stitched on the border of the day, to keep it from raveling out into indolence and irreligion. Wise is that Christian parent who hems every morning with the word of God and fervent prayer.

When the early devotions of the day are over,

then let us shoulder up its load cheerfully. The happiness and the serenity of the whole day depend very much upon a cheerful start. The man who leaves his home with a scowl on his brow, with a snap at his children, and a tart speech to his wife, is not likely to be a very pleasant companion for anyone, or to return home at night less acid than a vinegar-cruet. We never know what the day may bring forth, or when we shall leave our threshold for the last time, or hear the last "good-morning." Let us, therefore, set out on the day's journey under the wing of God's loving care, and committing our way unto Him. The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord. Eliezer described his happy and successful day's journey by saying at its close, "I being in the way, the *Lord led me* to the house of my master's brethren." When you and I are in the path of duty, and have sought the divine direction, we may feel sure that the Lord always will lead us likewise.

In order to make "good speed" in your day's journey, do not go overloaded. I do not refer so much to your undertaking too many things as to your carrying too many cares. Honest work is strengthening; but worry frets and fevers us. The temptation to worry should be resisted as a temptation of the devil; to yield to it is a sin against our own peace, and a reproach upon our Christian

character. The journey made by any pedestrian is simply a succession of steps. In accomplishing your day's work you have simply to take one step at a time. To take that step wisely is all that you need to think about. If I am climbing a mountain, to look down may make me dizzy; to look too far up may make me tired and discouraged. Take no anxious thought for the morrow. Sufficient for the day—yes, and for each hour in the day—is the toil or the trial thereof. There is not a child of God in this world who is strong enough to stand the strain of to-day's duties and all the load of to-morrow's anxieties piled upon the top of them. Paul himself would have broken down if he had attempted the experiment. We have a perfect right to ask our Heavenly Father for strength equal to the day; but we have no right to ask Him for one extra ounce of strength for anything beyond it. When the morrow comes, grace will come with it sufficient for its tasks or for its troubles.

“Let me be strong in word and deed  
Just for to-day;  
Lord! for to-morrow and its need  
I must not pray.”

The journey of each day—yes, and of every day until we reach the Father's House—is a walk of faith. We are often perplexed, and in our short-sighted ignorance we cry out: “Lord, how can we know the way?” The

answer comes back to us: "I will lead the blind in paths that they have not known; I will make the darkness light before them." When Eliezer humbly asked God to guide him, he made "good speed" indeed; he was directed to the very place and to the very person that he was in quest of. His master Abraham before him had made the journey from the land of the Chaldees to the land of Canaan entirely by faith; for he "went out not knowing whither he went." He had no maps and no itinerary; yet one thing he was sure of: he knew that God was his guide, and that he was heaven-bound. Every Christian should be a close and attentive observer of providential leadings. A conflict often arises between choosing our own way—that "jumps with our own selfish inclination"—or walking in God's way. Lot chose his own way, and it led him into Sodom. When he obeyed God's directions they led him in safety to Zoar. Jonah chose his own way, and it sent him overboard into the raging sea; then he took God's way, and it brought him to Nineveh on a mission of mercy.

Whatever perplexities may arise as to the meanings of the divine providences, or however fallible may be our own judgments, yet of one thing we may feel perfectly sure. God has given us a guide-book for every day's journey that is both divinely inspired and perfectly

infallible. "This is the Book," as Coleridge said of it, "that always finds us." There is not a difficult question in ethics on which this heaven-lighted lamp does not shed a clear light, and for every step in life it has a precept and a principle. The Bible is emphatically a book for everyday use; and the healthy Christian runs his Christianity through all the routine of his everyday experience. Some people keep their religion, as they do their umbrellas, for stormy weather; they may think it a convenient thing to have when their physician pronounces a fatal verdict, or when death is at the door. Others reserve their piety for the Sabbath and the sanctuary, and on Monday fold it up, and lay it away with their Sunday clothes. But every day of the week ought to be a "Lord's day," and carry us twenty-four hours nearer heaven. A healthy religion cannot be maintained simply by Sundays, and psalms, and sacraments; it must be fed both from the "upper springs" and the "nether springs." Brethren, let us see to it that the higher regions of our lives toward God are not more plentifully watered than those lower regions which embrace our conduct and our connection with our fellow-creatures. The lowly valleys in which we meet our families, our friends, and our business associates, ought to be just as verdant and well-watered as those Sabbath eleva-

tions on which we "see no man but Jesus only."

In the journey of each day we cannot predict what lies before us. We know not what the day may bring forth—whether of joy or sorrow. This is well; for our joys are heightened when they come as glad surprises, and to forecast our sorrows would only increase our sufferings without increasing our strength to bear them. Temptations, however, owe much of their peril and of their power to the fact that they commonly spring upon us unawares. Satan is no more likely to advertise the time and method of his assaults in advance than a burglar is to send us word that he will be trying the bolts of our front doors at one o'clock to-morrow morning. "I say unto you all, *Watch*," is the command of our Master. You may remember how, during the Civil War, the Union forces, flushed with victory and a false sense of security, were taking their morning meal very leisurely at Cedar Creek. Suddenly the Confederates pounced upon them and scattered them into a rout—which was only checked by the timely arrival of Sheridan after his famous and romantic ride from Winchester. We are all liable to have our Cedar Creeks; and the times in which we lay our armor off or relax our vigilance, and over-estimate our own spiritual strength, are the most disastrous in our life-record. "He that trusteth in his own

heart is a fool; but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered."

There is no journey of life but has its clouded days; and there are some days in which our eyes are so blinded with tears that we find it hard to see our way or even read God's promises. Those days that have a bright sunrise followed by sudden thunder-claps and bursts of unlooked-for sorrows are the ones that test certain of our graces the most severely. Yet the law of spiritual eyesight very closely resembles the law of physical optics. When we came suddenly out of the daylight into a room even moderately darkened, we can discern nothing; but the pupil of our eye gradually enlarges until unseen objects become visible. Even so the pupil of the eye of Faith has the blessed faculty of enlarging in dark hours of bereavement, so that we discover that our loving Father's hand is holding the cup of trial, and by and by the gloom becomes luminous with glory. The fourteenth chapter of John never falls with such music upon our ears as when we catch its sweet strains amid the pauses of some terrific storm. "Let not your hearts be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in ME; I will not leave you comfortless."

What are the happiest hours we spend in every day? I will venture to say that they are those which see us busy in doing good to others and in serving our Master.

A cup of cold water costs only the trouble to get it ; its refreshing draught may revive some fainting spirit. That is a bright hour in which we lift up some poor fellow-traveler and set him on his feet. A still brighter one is that in which we lead him to the Saviour. Harlan Page made it his rule never to talk to anybody for ten minutes without trying to do him, or her, some good. If all our hearts were more highly charged with the divine electricity, we should flash out sparks of loving kindness to everyone with whom we come in contact.

I very much fear that most of you see but very few days that are really full of joy in large measure, pressed down and running over ; and whose fault is it but your own ? One of the happiest Christians that I know is happy on a small income and in spite of some very sharp trials. The secret of happiness is not in the size of one's purse, or the style of one's house, or the number of one's butterfly friends ; the fountain of peace and joy is in the heart. If you would only throw open your heart's windows to the sunshine of Christ's love, it would soon scatter the chilling mists, and even turn tears into rainbows. Some professed Christians pinch and starve themselves into walking skeletons, and then try to excuse themselves on the plea of ill health or "constitutional" ailments. The

medicines they need are from Christ's pharmacy. A large draught of Bible taken every morning, a throwing open of the heart's windows to the promises of the Master, a few words of honest prayer, a deed or two of kindness to the next person whom you meet, will do more to brighten your countenance and help your digestion than all the drugs of the doctors. If you want to get your aches and trials out of sight, hide them under your mer-cies.

Bear in mind, my friends, that your happiness or your misery are very much of your own making. You cannot create spiritual sunshine any more than you can create the morning star ; but you can put your soul where *Christ is shining*. Begin every day with God. Keep a clean conscience, and a good stock of Bible-promises within reach. Keep a strong, robust faith that can draw honey out of a rock, and oil out of the flinty rock. Never spend a day without trying to do somebody good ; and then keeping step with your Master, march on toward Home over any road, however rough, and against any head-winds that blow. It will be all sunshine when we get to heaven, and “there is no night there !”

As I close this discourse and look over this assembly I cannot but observe how a day is a type of human life. That little child nestling beside its mother is now in the rosy dawn of

its existence. Yonder young men and maidens are still in the morning—under skies flushed with hope. These men of business and these mistresses of households are in the busy noon-tide. Many of you are far on in the afternoon ; and on some of our heads the gray hairs bespeak the approaching sundown. Be the journey long or short, may God give you “good speed” heavenward, and enable every one of you to do a round day’s work for Him ! Marble and granite are perishable monuments, and their inscriptions may be seldom read. *Carve your names on human hearts*; they alone are immortal ! Work while the day lasts ; for “the night cometh !” Let it come ! If Christ come with it, we can listen calmly for the sunset gun !

“ Just when Thou wilt, Oh, Master! call,  
Or at the noon or evening-fall,  
Or in the dark or in the light,  
Just when Thou wilt; it shall be right.

Just when Thou wilt; no choice for me,  
Life is a trust to use for Thee;  
Death is the hushed and glorious tryst  
With Thee, my King, my Saviour-Christ !”



**VIII.**  
**JESUS ONLY**



## VIII.

### JESUS ONLY.

“They saw no man, save Jesus only.”  
—MATTHEW xvii, 8.

THERE has been much discussion over the scene of our Lord’s transfiguration ; but to my mind it seems probable that it occurred upon one of the southern spurs of Mount Hermon, north of Cæsarea Philippi. The outlook from such a point would carry the eye from Lebanon, with its diadems of glittering ice, southward to the silvery mirror of Genesareth. But it was not that vision of natural beauty that the three disciples looked at chiefly. They saw Jesus only. Two illustrious prophets, Moses and Elijah, had just made their miraculous appearance on the top of the mount. But neither of these mighty men appeared any longer to the disciples’ view ; “they saw no man, save *Jesus only.*” These two words are large enough to suggest many a sermon ; let us gather up some of their teachings to us to-day.

I. In these words we find a clew to the power of the apostolic preaching. That ma-

jestic figure on the Mount became the central figure to the eye and the heart of the apostles. One Person occupied their thoughts ; one Person inspired all their most effective discourses. It was no such combination of philosopher and philanthropist as Renan has portrayed, or Theodore Parker preached ; it was the omnipotent and ineffable Son of God. They saw in Him “ God manifest in the flesh ” ; they saw in Him an infinite Redeemer, a divine Model of Life, a constant Intercessor, a never-failing Friend. When Peter delivered his first sermon at Pentecost, and when John described his sublime visions on the isle of Patmos, they directed all eyes to the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world. Paul gave utterance to the heart of the whole apostolic brotherhood when he said, “ I determined to know nothing among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.” Has not this been the key-note to the best sermons of the best preachers ever since ? Is not that the most powerful sermon which is the most luminous with Christ ? Depend upon it, my friends, that the pulpit, the theological seminary, the Sabbath school, and the printed volume which God owns with the richest success, are those which present most prominently “ no man, save Jesus only.”

We open our New Testament and we discover in its earliest pages a wonderful child.

It is a childhood that savors not of this world ; it has a celestial flavor about it. At the age of twelve the lad is astonishing the rabbis in the Temple by His questions, and His modest, sagacious answers. He opens the secret of His life when of His wondering mother He inquires, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business ?" Over the next eighteen years there hangs a thin veil through which we rather dimly discern a guileless young man toiling at the humble, honest trade of a carpenter ; the only record of it is that He "increased in favor with God and man." The greatest of our American Presidents found it to his advantage that he was cradled on the hard rocks of poverty, and was reared among the "plain people," with whom he kept in constant touch through his whole grand career. With an infinite wisdom Jesus of Nazareth chose to be born among the poor and never aimed to rise beyond the poor. When, in after years, some of the dignitaries of church or state offered Him some attentions, He put on no airs, and made no sycophantic homage to them in return. He knew that He was higher than the highest, yet loved to stoop as low as the lowliest. When He entered upon His public ministry and received the ordinance of baptism, it was preceded by no repentance of sin or regeneration by the Holy Spirit. Neither of them was needful to a person who "had

no sin ; neither was any guile found in His mouth.”

The three years of His marvelous ministry are all condensed into the one simple, matchless line—“He went about *doing good*.” Sorrow was the appeal to which He always opened His ear ; suffering was the surest passport to His kind attention ; sin He infinitely abhorred, but the sinner He pitied and loved with an infinite compassion. His simple purpose was to create anew our poor sin-cursed race, and to lift that race up to God. As a teacher He had an unique originality : He spoke by authority, and not as the scribes or the *savants*. Untaught Himself in any academy or university like those of Athens, He floods the world with a knowledge as much more profound than the philosophy of Socrates or Plato, as the Atlantic is deeper than the wayside pool. His telescope reaches into eternity ! Look also at His works of love, which are really no tasks to Him ; at His miracles of sight-restoring, health-recovering and death-conquering, all of which came as easy to Him as the lift of His finger, and the opening of His lips ! What manner of man was this, that even the winds and the sea obeyed Him ? His life is power personified ; it is benevolence on foot ; it is holiness filling every spot He touches with the atmosphere of the celestial climes.

See, too, how, without hardening Himself against sorrow, He takes the sorrows of others into His own bosom. No little annoyances provoke Him to petty displays of passion ; no stupendous agony shakes the constancy of the hand that holds the bitter cup to His own lips. As a lamb He goeth to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is dumb, so He opens not His mouth. He willingly consenteth to die, the "just for the unjust," when the latent power of His right arm might have laid Pilate and his ruffian crew in stiffened silence on the pavement of their judgment hall. He is willing to die, that a dying world of sinners might live ; "and when He hangs upon the cross a drooping flower of innocence," and the earth shudders with horror at the sight of such barbarities, a heathen soldier cannot refuse the involuntary confession, "Truly this man was the Son of God!"

Did such a being as this ever tread our old sinning and sobbing world ? Does history—sacred or profane—record such a wonderful career ? Search through all the annals of human kind, in all lands and ages, and you will find no man that answers to this description but ONE ! As the three disciples saw Him lifted o'er the Mount, His face shining as the sun and the raiment of His character white as the light, so has the world beheld Him ever since ; in all the universe there has been and

there is but one such personage ; it is "*Jesus only !*"

I have come to preach this Jesus to you to-day. Before me are many immortal souls who have brought hither certain troubles and difficulties, certain sorrows and spiritual wants. They have come to inquire : Who will show me any good ? who will help me ? Here, for instance, is a person who is not quite satisfied with himself ; nay, he is thoroughly dissatisfied. If I should bluntly tell him that he is a great sinner, and wicked enough to deserve an eternal condemnation, he might resent it and throw back the retort, " I am as good as you, sir." But in his secret heart he knows that he is far from what he ought to be, and would frankly acknowledge, " I don't pretend to be a religious man." He admits that he is not prepared to die ; and sometimes the thought of dying in his present condition sends a shiver over him. To-day he is yet in his sins, unforgiven and unconverted, with a tremendous score running up against him on God's record-book. " How shall I clear off that score against me, and make a new departure into a better life ? " The old question, you see, " What shall I do to be saved ? "

If you sincerely wish to be saved, there is a way to be saved. Repentance of your sins, however sincere, is not enough. Regret for sin in the past will not atone for it, or keep

you from sin in the future. Repentance is essential, is indispensable, but it is not enough to save your soul. It would be like a man's quitting a leaky boat at sea with no better one in sight; you may leave the swamping boat only to be swallowed up in the deep. What you need is a positive personal work wrought for you and wrought within you. There is One who can do this work, and one only. Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world! If the sins of the world, then your sins. The atonement He made for your guilt on the cross was perfect; He obeyed the demands of God's broken law perfectly; He wrought out His work of redemption perfectly, and no man need perish for want of an atonement. But in order to receive your share of the benefit of that work, you are required to go directly to Jesus Christ. Your Bible is valuable to you chiefly as a guide to Jesus Christ. Prayer is availing to you mainly as a means of approaching God in Christ. If you are thirsty, a cup—whether of coarse pottery or chased silver—is of value to you only as the utensil for bringing the water to your parched lips. The cup alone and empty would be a mockery. The sincerest prayer for salvation is an empty cup, unless it become a channel through which shall flow your confession and your desires toward Christ, and pardoning grace shall flow back to you from Christ.

Whoever would have his sins blotted out and a new heart created in him, must go to Jesus only. And if the means which he is employing—the Bible, the sermons, the prayers, or any other means—become his chief reliance, then they are a bane rather than a blessing. There is none who taketh away sin save Jesus only. There is one way, and but one way to be saved, and the sooner you reach it the better.

If you should happen to be at the Grand Central Railway station in New York when the Eastern Express train is about starting, you would see a certain number of people entering the cars that are labeled, “For Boston.” The doors of those cars stand open; the passengers enter and dispose themselves for the journey. They take it for granted that the station-master directed them rightly; and they do not run around inquiring if those be the right cars, or if they are safe, and are likely to keep to the track. They have made up their minds to go to Boston, and they have faith enough in the directors of the company and in its rolling stock to take the prescribed cars and trust their lives there. “There are a million of people in New York,” you might say; “there are only a half-dozen cars provided.” Very true; but there is room enough on that train for all the people of New York who desire to start for Boston at that hour and by

that route. That train carries those who come to it and no others. If you shall desire to reach Boston and yet fail to come to the station, or if you fail to procure the required ticket at the station, it is not the fault of the railway company that you do not get to Boston.

Pray do not think that this illustration belittles our solemn theme. I simply aim to draw your mind's eye to the glorious truth that Jesus Christ has "opened a new and living way" to escape from the "City of Destruction" (as Bunyan phrases it) to the City of God. Every vehicle that bears the inscription, "He that believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ hath everlasting life," is the right one for you to take. "Is it safe?" Myriads of penitent sinners have reached heaven by that road; try it! "I am ashamed to confess that I have not the means to procure a ticket." Yes; but one is offered to you gratuitously if you will accept it on certain conditions. At infinite cost our loving Redeemer has opened this way, and has provided the conveyances. "I am the way, the truth, and the life; whosoever cometh unto Me, shall in no wise be cast out." You are to come to Him only, obey His directions, trust your immortal soul to His keeping, and render to Him your heart's service and your unending gratitude.

When Jesus Christ paid the ransom of your

soul He took away its guilt and condemnation. When He provided what, without irreverence, we may call "the Gospel train" and opened wide its doors, He took away all your foolish and wicked excuses. When you break away from your favorite sins and come to Him in honest contrition and offer to do His will, He will take away your wicked heart. And every furlong that you go onward with Him, He will take away your doubts and lift off your heavy burden; and when you reach that unbridged river we call death, He will take away your fears, and land you safely on the shining shore, and of all the countless multitude you will find there, not one but will gratefully acknowledge that they were saved by "*Jesus only.*"

Perhaps one reason why you are not yet a Christian is that you have been mistaken as to what you ought to do, and just how to do it. Your experience may have been similar to that of the woman to whom a faithful minister once said :

"Have you been in the habit of attending church?"

"Yes, I have been to every church in town; but the little comfort I get soon goes away again, and leaves me as bad as before."

"Do you read the Bible at home?"

"Sir, I am always reading the Bible; sometimes I get a little comfort, but it soon leaves me as wretched as ever."

“Have you prayed for peace?”

“Oh, sir, I am praying all the day long; sometimes I get a little peace after praying, but I soon lose it. I am a miserable woman.”

“Now, madame, when you went to church, or prayed, or read your Bible, did you rely on these means to give you comfort?”

“I think I did.”

“To *whom* did you pray?”

“To *God*, sir; to whom else should I pray?”

“Now, read this verse, ‘Come unto me and I will give you rest.’ Jesus said this. Have you gone to Jesus for rest?”

The lady looked amazed, and tears welled up into her eyes. Light burst in upon her heart, like unto the light that flooded Mount Hermon on the transfiguration morn. Everything else that she had been looking at—church, Bible, mercy seat, and minister—all disappeared, and to her wondering, believing eyes there remained no man, save *Jesus only*. She was liberated from years of bondage on the spot. The scales fell from her eyes, and the spiritual fetters from her soul. Jesus only could do that work of deliverance; but He did not do it until she looked to Him alone.

This incident reached us during the first years of my ministry. With this “open secret” in my hand, I approached the first Roman Catholic that ever attended upon my preaching. He had turned his troubled eye

for a long time to the Holy Virgin and to sainted martyrs in the calendar. He had been often to a priest; never to a Saviour. I set before him Jesus only. He looked up and saw the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. "My Romish mother," said he to me, "would burn up my Bible if she knew I had one in my house." But she could not burn out the blessed Jesus from his emancipated and happy heart.

Next I took this simple revelation to a poor invalid of three-score and ten. His sight was failing, and the vision of his mind was as blurred and dim as the vision of his body. I set before him, in my poor way, *Jesus only*. The old man could hardly see the little grandchild who read aloud to him. But he could see Jesus with the eye of faith. The patriarch who had hardened under seventy years of sin became a little child. The skepticism of a lifetime vanished when the Holy Spirit revealed to his searching, yearning look the divine form of a Saviour crucified.

I never forgot these lessons learned in my ministerial boyhood. From that time to this, I have found that the only sure way of bringing light and peace to anxious inquirers is to direct them away from themselves, away from ritualities and stereotyped forms, away from agencies of every kind, away from everything save Jesus only. John the Baptist held

the essence of the gospel on his tongue when he cried out, "Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world." My anxious friend, be assured that you never will find pardon for the past, and hope for the future; you never will know how to live, or be prepared to die, until you look to *Jesus only*.

Here is a hint, too, for desponding Christians. You are harassed with doubts. Without are fightings, and within are fears. Why? Because you have tried to live on frames and feelings, and they ebb and flow like the sea-tide. You have rested on past experiences and not on a present Saviour. You have looked at yourself too much, and not to Him who was made to you righteousness and full redemption. Do you long for light, peace, strength, assurance, and joy? Then do your duty, and look to Jesus only.

When the godly-minded Oliphant was on his dying bed, they read to him that beautiful passage in the seventh chapter of Revelation, "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." (It is the passage which poor *Burns* could never read with a dry eye.) The old man exclaimed, "Perhaps that is so. The Bible tells me that there is no weeping in heaven; but I know I shall cry the first time I see my Saviour." He was right. And it will be so with all of us who come off more than conquerors. The first object that will enchain

our eyes on entering the gates of glory will not be the jeweled walls or the shining ranks of the seraphim. It will not be the parent who loves us, or the pastor who pointed out the way of life. But amid the ten thousand wonders of that wonderful world of light and joy, the believer's eye, in its first enrapturing vision, will "see no man, save JESUS ONLY."

## **IX.**

### **THE RE-CONVERTED CHRISTIAN.**



## IX.

### THE RE-CONVERTED CHRISTIAN.

“When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.”—  
LUKE xxii, 32.

AMONG all the chosen band of our Lord’s disciples, the most picturesque figure is Simon, the son of Jonas. We know him the most thoroughly—both sides of him. So honestly have the four evangelists portrayed him that we understand perfectly both the superb qualities and the pitiable infirmities of the man. When we see him leaping out of the fishing-boat to meet his Master o’er the raging waves, or avowing his faith in the divine mission of that Master so promptly, or impetuously drawing his sword to defend Him in Gethsemane, we are charmed with the eager impulsiveness that never stopped to count the consequences. A noted Irish preacher has somewhat wittily claimed him as “the Irishman among the apostles.”

There is another side of this brawny, impetuous, warm-hearted fisherman that we can never lose sight of; and the lamentable episode in his career, with which our text is connected,

is one that we could not afford to lose. Peter is a man we cannot spare. Standing or falling, he is worthy of our deepest and closest study ; and if he once wept bitterly, we also may shed honest tears that we have so often sinned in the same direction.

Our text, if torn out of its close connection, would puzzle us. When read as a part of a remarkable declaration and as revealing a part of a very remarkable character, it becomes perfectly clear and full also of weighty and wholesome instruction. Just before His scene of agony in the garden, and probably when on His way thither, our Lord turned to Peter and tenderly addressed him in these solemn words, “ Simon, Simon, behold Satan has asked to have you that he might sift you as wheat ; but I have made supplication for thee, that thy faith fail not ; and do thou when once thou hast turned again, stablish thy brethren.” I have given you the passage as rendered very accurately in the Revised Version of the New Testament. Now there are three important facts most distinctly visible in this declaration. The first one is that Peter was not at that time an unconverted man, for Christ recognizes that he possessed “ faith.” He was a genuine disciple. The second fact is that, while Satan would have liberty to sift poor Peter with a terrible temptation, Jesus Christ had interceded for him that he should not fall away

into utter apostasy. The third fact is that after the disgraceful fall which Christ foresaw (though Peter never dreamed of it) there should be a recovery. The word which is rendered "convert" in our Common Version really signified to face about, or to turn around. In this passage, it does not signify to revolve continually, but to take the opposite course as a ship does when it is "put about," or to turn as a flower does toward the sun. A fair paraphrase of the passage would be, "When in answer to my prayer for thee, thou hast turned back from the sin into which thou art about to fall, then thou shalt use thy bitter experience both to warn and to stablish thy brethren."

We do not wonder that the intrepid apostle was shocked by this startling announcement. There is no one in this world of whom we are oft-times so utterly ignorant as of the person who walks in our own shoes; and the things which we least anticipate are our own pitiful falls into sin. With hot indignation Peter repels the insinuation of his Master. "Lord, I am ready to go with Thee both into prison and to death." Matthew's narrative of the scene makes him to say also: "Though all men shall be offended because of Thee, yet *will not I.*" Was this the bluster of a braggart or the sad self-ignorance of a loyal man? The Master knew—not we—and like a dart He drove through Peter's soul the prediction,

“Verily I say unto thee, that this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.” Stung with horror at these terrible words, Peter cries out: “Though I should die with Thee, yet will I not deny Thee!” Never was a blind man nearer to a precipice than was the boastful apostle when he thus “gave the lie” to his Master. Judas had already gone over the precipice; and now shall Peter follow suit? Wait a little while and see. The pivot-hour in his life is just at hand.

In the last watch of that awful night, well on toward daybreak, he finds himself in the arched passage, or porch, of the high-priest’s palace. The night air is chilly, and a charcoal-fire has been kindled there, beside which Peter stands warming himself. He can see through into the judgment hall, where his Master is undergoing a mockery of judicial trial; but his own trial comes on suddenly. Satan, the sifter, steals in to sift him. “Art not thou one of this man’s disciples?” inquires the garrulous girl who keeps the door. He replies, “I am not!” The wheat is running out fast, and again the sifter shakes the sieve. For presently another servant-maid, spying the apostle back under the archway, flings at him the same question, and again, with craven cowardice, he stammers out, “I am not.” Pretty soon a kinsman of Malchus assails him, “Did I not see thee in the garden with Him?” and another

man badgers him with the taunt, “Surely thou art also one of them ; thy speech (thy brogue) betrayeth thee !” This is too much for the hounded disciple ; he can stand it no longer, but with a swaggering oath he hurls back the shameless falsehood, “I know not the man !” Just then the second crowing of the cock sounds through the early air of dawn. Just then, too, the eye of the Master, who had heard the shocking oath, falls on him and pierces his heart like an arrow. Ah, Peter, methinks that the sifter has found nothing in thee now but chaff and husks ! Stop—stop—the sifting is not done with yet. The difference between a bent tree and a broken tree is that the one springs back to its place when the pressure is removed, but the other never rises from the dust. Peter’s faith is a bent faith, not a broken one ; for no sooner does the cock-crow smite upon his ear, and the upbraiding look of his Master pierce his soul, than he hurries off in an honest out-gush of blinding tears. Out into the silent street he goes, not to hide his sin, like Judas, with the rope of a suicide, but to “weep bitterly” the tears that burst from a penitent heart. Those moments of keen anguish are the crucial moments of the apostle’s life. Those moments of sincere repentance are the answer to Christ’s intercessional prayer for his recreant disciple ; the “faith” that shamefully bent did not snap ; and out from that awful

experience he issues—a *reconverted man!* The seeming gravel has become granite again. Peter's thrice-repeated denial of his Lord is soon followed by the thrice-repeated assurance, “Lord, thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee.” That baptism of bitter tears was the needed baptism for his apostleship; the Holy Spirit was behind it all. A far stronger man to endure persecutions, to sympathize with the tempted and to establish weak brethren, was Simon Peter after that melancholy fall and that merciful *reconversion.*

What is the precise signification of this word? Certainly it is not the synonym of regeneration; for they are entirely different processes. Regeneration is the creation of a new life in the soul by the direct agency of the Holy Spirit. Conversion is the change of course, and of conduct which follows this regenerating work. No sinner ever “faces about” and turns back to that God from whom he is wandering except he be wrought upon by the Almighty Spirit. “Except a man be born anew, he cannot see the Kingdom of God;” but the Bible gives no hint of any second, or third, or fourth new birth of the soul. We recognize no such process in our spiritual experience. Reconversion is not a second regeneration. It is simply the return of a backsliding believer to that God from whom he has wandered. Peter's “faith”

did not depart from him in that sad and shameful hour of his cowardly denial of the Lord. Nor does any genuine Christian lose his religious character entirely during a season of spiritual declension. He is not a healthy man, nor a happy man ; but he is still alive. As we, who have been rescued from a snowdrift and thoroughly benumbed with cold, will come to again before a fire, so a frozen backslider may thaw out and recover under the warmth of Christ's restoring grace. It is a terrible process to go through, and a terrible risk to run. Let no member of Christ's flock tempt his or her Saviour by trying the perilous step. Peter would probably have ended just where Judas ended, had not the one been a genuine Christian and the other an impostor. Jesus prayed for Peter that his " faith might not fail " entirely ; and but for that timely intercession of his Master he could not have come out of that disgraceful night a reconverted man.

The process through which the apostle passed during his recovery was partially similar to the process of his original conversion. There was repentance, deep, pungent, and sincere. There was a faith in Christ exercised anew. The sorrow of his bitter contrition was intensified by the recollection of his former condition as the trusted disciple, and also of his recent ignominious fall. Now, as conversion is made up of repentance, faith, and new obedience to God,

so Peter's case was, in every sense, a reconversion. It was a *turning to Christ*; and it differed from a first conversion in two particulars, viz., the point set out from was a different point, and the distance traveled over was vastly less.

Perhaps there may be before me more than one who is now in a most pitiable condition of backsliding from Christ. Like an apple tree in midwinter, your roots may be still alive under all the biting cold; but there are no fruits of the Spirit now on your bare branches. As you have sinned like Peter, you must repent like Peter, however bitter the tears it may cost you. Dr. J. Addison Alexander has justly said, in one of his masterly discourses, that "backsliders often use palliative remedies, or rest on bygone experiences. What they really need is to be reconverted, to repent afresh, and to do their first works."

A recovery from backsliding—through the tender mercies of a pardoning Saviour—should be followed by a renewed consecration to His service. "When thou hast turned again," said Jesus to His erring disciple, "*stablish thy brethren.*" The discovered weakness of a Christian—when sincerely repented of—ought to make him not only the stronger, but the strengthener of others. There is not only an increased ability, but there ought to be an in-

creased obligation to perform this salutary office. The man who has once fallen under strong temptation, and has been mercifully lifted up by the divine arm, should not only walk more carefully ; he should use his experience for the warning of others. He knows now the danger of relying on his own arm ; and knows, also, how “evil and bitter a thing it is to depart from the living God.” He has learned the difficulties of a recovery to the position whence he had slipped away. His experience ought to make him a valuable helper to others—however dearly bought that experience has been to himself. David’s wretched fall into sin called forth that piercing cry, “O God, renew a right spirit within me ; restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation, and uphold me with Thy free spirit !” That fifty-first Psalm—wrung out of a broken heart —has been of infinite value to God’s people ; if its beacon light warns against the terrible danger of sin, it also illumines the pathway of penitence and recovery.

A presumptuous Alpine climber—anxious to find a shorter path over one of the glaciers— quits his guide and his companions, and sallies off to be a guide unto himself. The shout of bravado, which he sends back to his companions, marks his confidence in his own sagacity and pluck. He laughs at their fears—while they are laughing at his folly. A snowdrift

lies across his path, soft as eider-down ; and with headlong eagerness he plunges into it. In an instant he disappears from view ; and the ring of the icicles in the depths of the crevasse is the last sound that strikes upon his ears as he plunges—senseless, bruised, and mangled—into the ice cavern that yawns to receive him ! Slowly, and as from a frightful “ dream when one awaketh,” he comes to himself. He is alive, and that is all. There is life even in the broken arm that hangs useless at his side. To ascend the perpendicular wall of the crevasse is impossible. If he remains where he is, he will soon freeze into an ice mummy within that awful sepulcher. As he listens for some sound, he faintly hears the musical tinkle of dripping water ; and as he creeps slowly toward it he hears a running stream. It is pitch dark ; but he gropes his way through the channel of the stream until he discovers a slight gleam on the ice walls of the aperture before him. He hails it as the dawn of hope. It telegraphs to him escape and possible salvation. Onward he struggles, with broken bones, but with unbroken faith, until at last he issues forth at the base of the glacier into sunshine and safety ! Although terribly bruised, he is a saved man ; and is so saved as to be abler to save others from the presumptions of sin that had well-nigh been his own destruction. How ready he is to warn

others from that treacherous crevasse, and perhaps he puts up a finger-board of caution to turn many other climbers who might be as rashly venturous as himself! How careful he will evermore be to follow only a trusty guide when scaling the dizzy and dangerous heights! Saved himself from the jaws of death, he strives to save others from a course as rash and reckless as that which had cost him so dearly.

This Alpine parable may illustrate for you the peculiar service which every restored back-slidder may render to his fellow-disciples. To him the places of spiritual danger are distinctly marked, and he may the more readily point them out. To him the sorrow and the suffering of a fall into sin are palpable and painful; and the joy of recovery by the divine grace is like life from the tomb. When my beloved friend Gough warned his fellow-men against the treacherous chasm into which strong drink betrays its victims, it was with the thrilling eloquence of one who had himself been draggled up wounded and mangled from the abyss! Whoso thinketh that he standeth, let him take heed lest he fall. If poor Peter sinned grievously, he most grandly repented, and fought on grandly, too, for his Master, until the crown of a holy martyrdom was worn. His thrice repeated denial in his hour of weakness was followed by the thrice repeated avowal in his

hour of renewed strength. “Thou knowest, Lord, that I love thee!” Reconverted himself, he was able to establish his weaker brethren by his faithful warnings against temptation, and by the granite-like firmness of his own example. My friend, has divine love stretched out its arm and rescued thee from the horrible pit, and set thy feet upon the rock? Then walk carefully and watch unto prayer. Sympathize with those who, through the weakness of their faith or the strength of the tempter’s assaults, have fallen from their first estate; and reconverted thyself, do thy utmost—with God’s help—to establish thy brethren.

“Man-like is it to fall into sin,  
Fiend-like is it to dwell therein,  
Saint-like is it for sin to grieve,  
Christ-like is it all sin to leave.”

**X.**

**SERMONS IN SHOES.**



## X.

### SERMONS IN SHOES.

“As ye go, preach!”—MATTHEW x, 7.

THIS was the brief but comprehensive commission given by our Lord to His twelve disciples. In these words is contained their divine call to the gospel ministry. At first, and during the earthly life-time of their Master, this ministry was confined to the “lost sheep of the house of Israel”; but after His ascension to heaven, their field was as wide as the world. They, and many of the converts whom they made, went everywhere preaching the Word. The Master does not seem to have ordained any of them to a superior rank over their associates; no one of them was created an Archbishop; much less was any of them a Pope. Neither at the outset did they stop to organize themselves into Conferences or Councils, into Synods or General Assemblies. Their preaching also would appear to have been of the most simple and elementary character. It was certainly not after the style of our modern elaborate discourses or before congregations assembled in stately sanctuaries with all the

modern appliances of public worship. Each man spoke the word which the Holy Spirit gave to him. Peter talks to Cornelius, and his assembled kinsfolk, until the Spirit descends upon them, and they are converted and baptized. Paul preaches to the Philippian jailer and condenses the core of the gospel into a single sentence. Philip overtakes a titled foreigner in his chariot by the roadside, and a "Bible reading" is extemporized on the spot. That was preaching—truth-teaching—in its most elementary form. Aquila and Priscilla become expounders of the new gospel, with the gifted Apollos for their pupil. Down at Joppa industrious Dorcas takes to preaching also, but woman-like she employs her needle as her instrument; and her actions speak louder than words. And so the hive is all busy. Everyone who has a message delivers it; everyone who can heal a sick man or mend a crippled limb performs the miracle of love; everyone who has a lamp lets it shine. Their Lord and Master is glorified by their "bearing much fruit."

Those men and women introduced into this world a new style of life. Such characters as Peter and John and Paul, as Stephen and Barnabas and Dorcas and Onesiphorus, the world had not seen before. Such *sermons in shoes*—going about doing good—had not been treading the thoroughfares of sinful humanity.

The word came with power, because these men and women were themselves a power ; they reflected Jesus Christ in their beautiful humility, their unselfish benevolence, and their strenuous philanthropy. This was probably one great secret of their success.

That band of devoted imitators of Christ Jesus exerted an influence "on which our modern churches look back with a sort of admiring despair" ; they were inspired with a spiritual might before which hoary systems of error tottered to the ground. It may be that their style of preaching was more simple and direct than ours ; it may be that the gospel came with a freshness and novelty which it no longer possesses ; the spoken word was attended with miracles visible to the eye ; but all these causes do not sufficiently account for the marvels and the majesty of apostolic power. One great reason for their success was that their character and conduct were so irresistibly eloquent ; their actions spoke louder than their words. People discovered that, though Jesus of Nazareth had departed, His likeness had been left behind Him ; the Christ was yet alive in the lives of His followers. The people saw that Christian love was more than a new doctrine ; it was a practical principle working out in deeds of brotherly kindness, while it shared its loaf with the needy, brought healing to the sick, and light to the benighted. They saw

that the divine sympathy of Jesus was living still in His disciples when they grasped the hands of poor outcasts and still "ate with publican and sinner." They beheld the divine magnanimity of Jesus reproduced in his followers, who endured persecution without flinching, and returned hard blows with gentle words of love. Ah, there was a force in the silent preaching of such Christ-like lives which struck the world with wondering awe! Scoffers might ridicule the fishermen's discourses; rabbis might jeer at the doctrines of the atonement and the resurrection; but they could not gainsay the beauty of the apostles' conduct, or deny the positive good that these "heretics" were achieving every day. When the Master gave His great commission, "as ye go, preach," He meant by it—as ye go, *shine*; as ye go, testify of Me; as ye go, heal the sick body and the sick soul; as ye go, bear fruit, and live out the gospel intrusted to you! It was the sermons of heroic and holy living that shook the world, and have come down ringing and resounding through the centuries. And the preaching which this sinning and sobbing old world of ours needs to-day is of the same character. The only way in which we can hope to reproduce, in any good degree, the glory of that apostolic era is by the same living manifestation of Jesus Christ. The

best sermon that you and I can furnish is : *Christ liveth in me.*

Observe that I include *you*, my brethren and sisters, as co-preachers of our beloved Master. To you in these pews comes the command, as directly as to me in this pulpit, "Go ye and preach!" Do you suppose that all the setting forth of Jesus Christ in this broad land is to be done by the sixty or seventy thousand persons who are officially ordained to the gospel ministry? What are our barley loaves for the supply of fifty millions of hungry souls? And what are our few hours of public discourse—chiefly upon a single day—in comparison with the combined eloquence of millions of Christian voices and Christian lives on every day of the round year? Be assured that the commission to preach Jesus Christ is not restricted to any limited monopoly of men or of measures. It comes to every child of converting grace with the gift of that grace. No sooner does our Lord, by His Spirit, make you Christians than He bids you become soul-winners also. "Let him that heareth say *come!*!"

There are many ways of preaching Christianity without choosing a text, or standing in a pulpit. William Wilberforce proclaimed the gospel of breaking fetters on the floor of the British Parliament, even though he never had a prelate's ordaining hand laid on his

honored head. George H. Stuart was an apostle of the cross when he organized his "Christian Commission," to furnish its spiritual "rations" to our brave boys in blue during the Civil War. Elizabeth Fry preached Christ to brazen women in the corridor of Newgate prison ; and in our time Lady Henry Somerset proves the patent of her true nobility by unselfish labors among the slums of London. Sometimes the Master ordains His workmen to a special mission : as when Father Mathew wrought for the reformation of Irish drunkards, and William Logan for the rescue of fallen women in Glasgow Street, or Anthony Comstock for the cleansing of our land from a filth fouler than any "Augean stables." Christ scatters his commissions very widely. Harlan Page distributing tracts through a city workshop ; Ralph Wells gathering his mission class from the attics or the cellars ; the sweet "Dairymen's Daughter" murmuring the name of Jesus with her faint, dying voice, and Lord Shaftesbury addressing the thieves and the tramps of London, were each and all most surely the ordained missionaries of their Master. There have been but few more faithful ministers than Thomas Halyburton, and some of his most impressive discourses were pronounced upon a dying bed. "This is the best pulpit," said he, "that ever I was in ; I am laid on this bed for this very end, that I may commend my

Lord." What a host of colleagues I have had in this beloved congregation during the past thirty years—some of whom have preached most impressively to me in their sick chambers, and many more are gospeling the children every Sabbath in yonder hall. My brilliant brother, Doctor Hitchcock, has said, "I confess that I do not see how Christianity is ever to carry the day unless the great bulk of our church membership becomes also a ministry. Is it possible for any man to be a true Christian himself and yet be doing nothing to make other men Christians too? Who, if he could, would like to be plodding heavenward in a path only wide enough for one?"

The number of those who possess the peculiar qualifications for the pulpit are comparatively few; and probably a majority of all the Christians in our land, old and young, might not be able to deliver very edifying addresses in a prayer meeting. But every true follower of Jesus can be a witness for Him; and there is many a Christian life that is quite as eloquent as any discourse ever delivered by a Chrysostom or a Chalmers. By pureness, by long-suffering, by truthfulness, by love unfeigned, and by a holy conversation, the humblest of Christ's disciples may become His ambassador. "I canna answer many questions aboot Jesus," said the humble Scotchwoman to her pastor, "but I *could dee* for Him." It is

the faith that cannot only live for Christ, but is ready to die for Him, that carries with it an irresistible power.

Actions speak louder than words, because they commonly cost more ; we usually test the utterances of the lips by the conduct of the life. The words of promise spoken at the marriage altar are weighed in the scales of wedlock ; they may prove to be solid gold, or they may be lighter than a feather. We test the solemn confessions and covenants made by many of you before this pulpit by the lives you are now leading before the world. Our Master's own challenge is, "by their *fruits* ye shall know them." The religious truth contained in a book, or in a creed, or in a discourse, is only a theory. That same truth, if wrought out into noble deeds and godly character, becomes certified by experiment. Men once disputed what Robert Fulton affirmed in regard to the propulsion of vessels by steam ; but no one now disputes a Cunarder. Scoffers derided Morse and Field as sanguine visionaries ; no man laughs now at the sub-ocean cable. Christianity, attested by its fruits, is unanswerable. If it purifies the human heart, if it elevates the affections, if it conquers sinful lusts, and subdues evil passions, if it prompts to generous sympathies and noble deeds, if it sweetens the home and cleanses society, if it lifts fallen humanity up toward God, and if it

makes its possessors the better, stronger, purer, and holier, then doth it vindicate its divine origin and establish its divine authority. Such a religion no scoffer can laugh down, and no philosopher can silence. The divine author of Christianity demanded this crucial test for His gospel, and sent forth His disciples with the commission, "As ye go, preach!" and this commission was qualified with the solemn proviso, "Herein is my Father in heaven glorified, that ye *bear much fruit.*" The great object for which Jesus Christ came into this world, and for which His gospel is preached, is to form godly character. Christlieb was right when he said that the "living Christian is the world's Bible"; and there are millions in our land who seldom look at any other. We, whose business it is to preach Christianity, must also remember that people look at us when outside of our pulpits to discover exactly what we mean when we are in our pulpits. If our conduct before the community contradicts the utterances on God's day in God's house, then the most eloquent tongue becomes a tinkling cymbal. A certain parishioner once remarked, "My pastor's discourses are not brilliant, but his daily life is a sermon all the week." Paul stood behind all his inspired writings; the "living epistle" moves us as deeply as any words he ever sent to Rome or to Corinth. More than one-half of the power

of many successful ministers has lain in their personality. Not long ago the city of Edinburgh, through its official magistracy and multitudes of its citizens, honored the obsequies of the late Principal Cairns. Of all the thousands of mourners who thronged the streets with uncovered heads, but a small proportion had ever heard him preach or had ever read any of his works. Their homage was paid to the grand old man who had moved before them for many a year illustrating, in his own useful life, the things that are true, and the things that are just and lovely and of good report. A similar homage had been paid a few days before, and on a grander scale, to the world-known pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle. Popular as his preaching and his books had been, yet behind all his throngs of admiring auditors, and behind his Pastor's College, and all his many institutions of charity, was Spurgeon, *the man of God*. It was Spurgeon, the fearless, the faithful, the holy-hearted *man*, to whom princes and archbishops sent messages of sympathy during his long sickness, and to whom honest, loving tributes were paid in Jewish synagogues and Quaker meeting houses and lofty Episcopal cathedrals. Such scoffers as Ingersoll cannot verify their taunt that "Christianity is dying out," when London and Edinburgh throng their thoroughfares with extraordinary testimonials of re-

spect for two humble-minded evangelical ministers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In these days the malaria of infidelity is in the air. It threatens our colleges and poisons no little of our current literature. Skepticism is not to be vanquished by volumes of Apologetics. It arrogantly claims that the Cæsar of science is on its side, and to Cæsar it shall go. True science judges causes by results. No candid scientist can legitimately deny that if Christianity makes people better, purer and holier, and elevates man God-ward, then it vindicates its value and attests its divine origin. No lie is of the truth. No falsehood of an imposter makes men upright. The tree must be judged by its fruits ; a bad tree cannot produce good fruits ; no thorn-bush can yield Hamburg grapes. All the skeptics on the globe cannot refute the unanswerable argument of a consistent, cheerful, courageous Christian life.

This fact lays upon us who profess and call ourselves Christians, a most tremendous responsibility. The question is sometimes asked “why are not more souls converted under the public preaching of the Word ?” To this question it is not a sufficient answer to say that “God purposes to save only a portion of the human race.” God purposes to save everyone who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ and follows Him. Nor is it a sufficient reply to affirm that all men are naturally “dead in tres-

passes and sin," and can only be made alive by the regenerating Holy Spirit. Let us not throw the blame of men's impenitence on a just and loving God. I very much fear that the blame rests nearer home; and that one great reason why there are not more converts to Christianity is that there is so much preaching against it by those who ought to be preaching for it. Every unworthy act of a professing Christian is a sermon against our Master and His gospel. Satan's most successful preachers are inconsistent professors. The bad sermons during the week are often an overmatch for the best sermons on the Sabbath. Oh, my dear brethren, do you suppose that if you and I practised more faithfully the instructions of this holy Word, we would not be able to win more souls to Jesus?

As every one of you is a preacher, and every life is a sermon, let me inquire of you: what sort of a sermon are you preaching? Do you find your texts in the shop or in the stock market, and preach that the chief end of life is to make money? Then you are making more converts to Mammon than to Christ. Do some of you preach that self-indulgence is the "one thing needful?" Then you will draw more to the pleasure party and the playhouse than you will to the prayer meeting. It boots but little that the Eighth Commandment is taught from this pulpit if any of you are guilty of sharp

practices in your business, or refuse to give every man his due. What is done by God's professing people outside of the sanctuary carries more weight than anything said within the sanctuary—even though Paul himself stood in the pulpit. And if the great apostle had not lived out what he taught, he could not have won a single convert to the Gospel.

My brethren, as ye go, preach! But take heed how and what ye preach. The recording angel is taking notes; and the "book shall be opened." When the Master gave the commission to His witness-bearers, He said to them—learn of Me!—follow Me! let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in Heaven! To-day this world's sorest need is for more Christ-like men and women. The sermons it needs are *sermons in shoes*. The preaching that alone can save it is the preaching of a living Christ illustrated by the holy lives of His followers. A church that does not tread in the footsteps of its Master will never convert a sinful world to God. But a church of consecrated disciples, whose hearts have been cleansed by the frequent baptisms of the Spirit, and whose lives have been made beautiful by inward conflicts and secret prayer, such a church is the embodiment of a living Jesus in this sin-cursed world. Their voice is a trumpet. Their example is a light. Their

influence is a salt. Their power is a power to wake the dead ; for their master promiseth “*lo ! I am with you always !*” To be such preachers you and I require the ordination and the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Let us humbly and devoutly seek it !

**XI.**

**LOOKING AT THINGS RIGHTLY.**



## XI.

### LOOKING AT THINGS RIGHTLY.

“Thou hast well seen.”—JEREMIAH i, 12.

THERE is a right way and a wrong way of looking at almost everything. Some persons seem to have no eye for beauty ; and others see every object through a distorted vision. To such persons one of Turner’s finest landscapes is merely so much paint and canvas ; to a man like Ruskin it is a masterpiece of golden sunlight, bathing field and forest with its splendors. Niagara is a disappointment to many on a first view ; the mighty cataract gradually educates the eye to a right conception of its crumbling cliff of snow-white waters shot through with emerald.

“Thou hast well seen” were God’s words to Jeremiah when He called him to be a prophet to the people of Israel. The modest young man had just said, “I cannot speak, for I am a child.” The Lord touches his mouth and inspires him with the gift of words. He then tests the accuracy of his vision by the question “What seest thou ?” Jeremiah does not reply, I see a bit of wood, or I see a staff ; his answer is, “I see a rod of an almond tree.” This was

just what the Lord meant that the young prophet should see. The almond was a tree of rapid growth which put forth its blossoms early in the spring ; it was a type of speedy action. As Jeremiah had shown his quickness of apprehension and accuracy of discernment, God commended his answer and said unto him, “Thou hast well seen.”

It is vastly important that you and I should seek for spiritual discernment ; for many of our joys and many of our sorrows proceed from our method of looking at those things which most concern our peace. How differently, for example, the Lord Jesus Christ appears to different eyes. Long ago it was predicted that the Messiah would be to many as “a root out of dry ground, having no form or comeliness. When they shall see Him, there is no beauty that they should desire Him ; He will be despised and rejected of men.” When Jesus came therefore to his own, they received Him not. As many as beheld Him rightly and welcomed Him, to them gave He the precious privilege to become the children of God. To all such, in every age and land, He is the chiefest among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely. Jesus Christ never changes. The difference between the thoughtless sinner and the same person after he is regenerated is that he looks at Christ with a new eye, and has discovered Him to be the very Saviour that he needs.

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Some people look at Jehovah only as a consuming fire, and are struck through with despair. Others go to the opposite extreme and see in Him only an infinite goodness and tender mercy ; such are in danger of becoming blind to the sinfulness of sin, and they easily slide away into a belief in universal salvation. The man who magnifies God's mercy at the expense of His justice, and who does not believe that God will punish unrepented sin as it deserves, has not "well seen." He will discover his delusion, at his terrible cost, on the "last great day." Those wise men in the Westminster Assembly saw the Divine attributes in their right proportion when they framed that wonderfully comprehensive answer—"God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth."

I. We are all apt to make egregious mistakes when we look at our Heavenly Father's providential dealings. Even some Christians are betrayed into a heathenish habit of talking about "good luck" and "bad fortune," and using other expressions that convey the idea that this life is a game of chance. Blind unbelief may be expected to err, and to scan God's work as either a riddle or a muddle. A Christian who has had his eyes opened ought to know better than to make such mistakes. Yet how prone we are to regard many of God's

dealings in a wrong light and to call them by wrong names! We speak of things as afflictions, which are really blessings in disguise. We congratulate people on gaining what turns out to be a terrible snare, or worse than a serious loss. Quite as often we condole with them over occurrences which are about to yield to them blessings more precious than gold. The patriarch Jacob evidently thought that he was a fair subject for commiseration when he groaned out in his grief, "me have ye bereaved of my children ; Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away : all these things are against me." His dim vision could not foresee that happy evening when the returning caravan from Egypt would bring to him Simeon and Benjamin, and the thrilling announcement that the long-lost Joseph was governor over all the realm of Pharaoh. He had not "well seen" what sort of a God he had once vowed to serve.

Let us hesitate before we condole with a brother who is under the chastisement of our loving Father in Heaven. Be careful how you condole with a man who has lost his money and saved his good name, or congratulate the man who has made a million at the expense of his piety. When a Christian is toppled over from a dizzy and dangerous height, and "brought down to hard pan," he is brought down to the solid rock at the same time. In

the valley of humiliation he has more of the joy of God's countenance, and wears more of the herb called "heart's-ease" in his bosom, than he ever did in the days of his giddy prosperity. Sickness has often brought to a man spiritual recovery ; suffering has often wrought out for him an exceeding weight of glory.

I have seen people condole tenderly with a weeping mother whose child has flown away home to heaven ; but they never thought of condoling with her over a living child who was a frivolous slave of fashion, or a dissipated sensualist, or a wayward son, the "heaviness of his mother." A hundred times over have I pitied more the parent of a living sorrow than the parent of a departed joy. Spare your tears from the darlings who are safe in the arms of Jesus, and spend them over the living who are yet dead in sin and sheer impenitence. Let us learn to see things rightly, and call them by their right names. We often drape our real blessings with a pall, and decorate our dangerous temptations with a garland. Let us all pray for spiritual discernment and often be putting up the petition, "Lord, open Thou our eyes." Then we may discover that this life is only a training school for a higher and a better one ; then we shall see a Father's smile behind the darkest cloud ; and at the end of the pilgrimage of duty it will be one of the raptures of heaven to behold the King in

His beauty, and to know even as we have been known.

II. Let me, in the next place, remind you that if we possessed more spiritual discernment, we would not so often torment ourselves with sinful anxieties about the future. Our loving Lord knew what was in man when He reiterated His remonstrances against borrowing trouble in advance, and when He said, "be not, therefore, anxious for the morrow ; for the morrow will be anxious for itself ; sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Worry is not only a sin against God, it is a sin against our own peace. It sometimes amounts to a slow suicide. Honest work, however hard, seldom hurts us ; it is worry that corrodes and kills.

There is only one practical remedy for this deadly sin of anxiety, and that is to *take short views*. Faith is content to live "from hand to mouth," enjoying each blessing from God as it comes. This perverse spirit of worry runs off and gathers some anticipated troubles and throws them into the cup of mercies and turns them to vinegar. A bereaved parent sits down by the new-made grave of a beloved child and sorrowfully says to herself, "Well, I have only one more left, and one of these days he may go off to live in a home of his own, or he may be taken away ; and *if* he dies, my house

will be desolate and my heart utterly broken." Now who gave that weeping mother permission to use the word "if" ? Is not her trial sore enough now, without overloading it with an imaginary trial ? And if her strength breaks down, it will be simply because she is not satisfied with letting God afflict her ; she tortures herself with imagined afflictions of her own. If she could but take a short view, she would see a living child yet spared to her, to be loved and enjoyed and lived for. Then, instead of having two sorrows, she would have one great possession to set over against a great loss ; her duty to the living would be not only a relief to her anguish, but the best tribute she could pay to the departed.

That is a short view which only takes in immediate duty to be done, the immediate temptation to be met, and the immediate sorrow to be carried. My friend, if you have money enough to-day for your daily wants and something for God's treasury, don't torment yourself with the idea that you or yours may yet get into an almshouse. If your children cluster around your table, enjoy them, train them, trust them to God, without racking yourself with a dread that the little ones may some time be carried off by the scarlet fever, or the older ones may yet be ill-married or may fall into disgrace. Faith carries present loads and

meets present assaults and feeds on present promises, and commits the future to a faithful God. Its song is :

“Keep Thou my feet ; I do not ask to see  
The distant scene ; one step’s enough for me.”

We shall always take that one step more wisely and firmly and successfully if we keep our eye on that only. The man who is climbing the Alps has but to follow his guide and set his foot on the right spot before him. This is the way you and I must let Christ lead, and have Him so close to us also that it will be but a short way to behold Him. Sometimes young Christians say to me, “I am afraid to make a public confession of Christ ; I may not hold out.” They have nothing to do with holding *out* ; it is simply their duty to hold *on*. When future trials and perils come, their Master will give them help for the hour, if they only make sure that they *are His*. The short view they need to take is a close, clear view of their own spiritual wants, and a distinct view of Jesus as ever at hand to meet those wants. If the fishermen of Galilee had worried themselves over the hardships they were to encounter, they might have been frightened out of their apostleships and their eternal crowns.

We ministers need to guard against this malignant devil of *worry*. It torments one pastor with a dread lest, if he preach certain

truths boldly, he may offend his rich pew-holders and drive them away. Let him take care of his conscience, and his Master will take care of him. Another is worried lest his cruse may run dry and his barrel fail. But his cruse has not yet run dry. Oh, no, it is his faith that is running low. Some of us, at the beginning of a year's work, are tempted to overload ourselves with the anticipation of how much we have to do; we need not worry if we will only remember that during the whole year there will be *only one* working day, and that is—*to-day*. Sufficient to each day is the labor thereof.

Once more we say—let us take short views. Let us not climb the high wall till we get to it, or fight the battle till it opens, or shed tears over sorrows that may never come, or lose the joys and blessings that we have, by the sinful fear that God will take them away from us. We need all our strength and all the grace God can give us for to-day's burdens and to-day's battle. To-morrow belongs to our Heavenly Father. I would not know its secrets if I could. It is far better to know Whom we trust, and that He is able to keep all we commit to Him until the last great day.

“ Why forecast the trials of life  
With such sad and grave persistence,  
And look and watch for a crowd of ills  
That as yet have no existence ?

“Strength for to-day is all we need,  
For we never will see to-morrow;  
When it comes, the morrow will be a *to-day*,  
With its measure of joy or sorrow.”

III. If a right spiritual discernment tends to correct false views of God and his providence, and to repress sinful anxieties, it will also check our impatience in regard to the issue of God’s wise dealings and discipline. “I never let bairns or fools see my pictures until they are done,” said a Scotch artist to me, quoting a familiar proverb of his countrymen. As the artist was unwilling to have any judgment pronounced on his work until it was completed, so our Heavenly Father bids us possess our souls in patience. “What I do, thou knowest not *now*; but thou *shalt* know hereafter.” We must wait and see. This world is but a preparatory school in which character is on the easel or under the chisel. God’s hand sometimes lays on dark colors; his chisel often cuts deep. No trial of our faith is joyous, but grievous; nevertheless *afterward* it may work out the eternal weight of glory. Now we know but “in part,” and what we do discern is seen through a glass darkly. Why the most pleasant room in our dwelling is turned into a hospital—why the pillow in that little empty crib is unpressed to-day—why that income on which so many mouths depended is now reduced—why this or that staff is broken, our poor blind,

aching hearts cannot understand. God keeps his own secrets. The only answer which he vouchsafes to us now is “all things work together *for good* to them that love Me.” Impatient and rebellious as we may be, we cannot displace God’s hand from the canvas ; there is no help for us but to wait until the picture is completed. Some of the colors he is laying into our lives are frightfully somber ; but by and by in the revealing light of the last day they may be only a background on which faith and submissive trust will stand out in hues of golden glory. It is the duty of “bairns” to sit still and practice docility.

“ When my boy with eager questions,  
    Asking how, and where, and when,  
Taxes all my store of wisdom,  
    Asking o’er and o’er again  
Questions oft to which the answers  
    Give to others still the key,  
I have said, to teach him patience,  
    ‘Wait, my little boy, and see.’

“ And the words I taught my darling,  
    Taught to me a lesson sweet ;  
Once when all the world seemed darkness,  
    And the storm about me beat,  
In the ‘children’s room’ I heard him,  
    With a child’s sweet mimicry,  
To the baby brother’s questions,  
    Saying wisely, ‘ Wait and see.’

“ Like an angel’s tender chiding  
    Came the darling’s words to me,

Though my Father's ways were hidden  
Bidding me still wait and see.  
What are we but restless children,  
Ever asking what shall be ?  
And the Father, in His wisdom,  
Gently bids us ' wait and see. ' "

I am ready to confess that it is not from the open assaults of infidelity or from the skeptical pages of the Strausses or Spencers that the severest strain has come upon our faith. It is from the mysterious permissions of Divine Providence that we are oftenest in danger of having that faith shipwrecked. We not only turn cowards in the dark, but like fools we doubt whether there ever will be a day-dawn. In such hours, it is wise to bring in the lamp of that bright passage of the Thirteenth Psalm : "weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." The original Hebrew is far more forcible ; it literally reads, "in the evening sorrow lodgeth, but at the day-dawn cometh shouting." The "shouting" will be raised by the discovery of what was in existence all the while, and that is God's marvelous wisdom and unfailing love. I once spent a night on the summit of Mount Righi, and the darkness was so dense that I could not see a single yard from my window. But when the sun arose, the polished mirror of Lake Lucerne spread beneath me, and the icy coronets of the Jungfrau and the Finsteraarhorn

glittered in the rosy beams. They had been there all through the night waiting for the unfoldings of the day-spring from on high.

A great deal of our work in this world may be called night-work. Weary with rowing, we even get frightened by the apparition of the Master, and like the disciples, cry out "it is a ghost!"—until He reveals Himself in the words, "It is I; be of good cheer; be not afraid!" The history of every discovery of new truth, of every enterprise of benevolence, of every Christian reform, and of almost every church revival is the history of long working, watching and waiting through seasons of dark discouragement. "We have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing," was the lament of the tired, hungry, and sleepy disciples. But in the early gray of the day-break they espy the Master on the beach; the net is cast afresh, and lo! it swarms with a shoal that breaks through the meshes! So doth our Lord test His children before He blesses them. The lesson for every pastor, every missionary, every teacher, every reformer, and every sorely-tried child of God is in these heaven-taught words, "I wait for the Lord and in His Word do I hope; my soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning."

IV. We come back, in closing, to the point whence we set out—that there is a right way, and a wrong way of looking at all things. To

the eye that has spiritual discernment this world is mainly an avenue to that one which lieth beyond it. Talents, wealth, and influence are simply loans that are to be held in trust for God. Social promotion signifies a more commanding position in which to serve the Master. A christianized eye sees in money just so much bread for the hungry, just so many Bibles for the godless, just so many lifts of the outcast and degraded—as well as innocent and refining enjoyments for one's own household. My friend, if thou findest the “image and superscription” of Christ on every dollar you earn, “thou hast well seen.” To a truly regenerated soul all things become new; and we may well doubt the genuineness and the depth of that conversion which does not bring an altered estimate of everything earthly. Faith breaks the charm of this world, and adds a charm to the better world.

Are there any here who desire to have their spiritual vision purged? I would commend to them the example of that blind man, who came and besought Jesus to touch him; for he fancied that a simple touch of the miracle-worker would restore his sight. Jesus led him along through the streets and “out of the town;” and then putting spittle on his closed eyes, He inquired, “do you see anything?” The poor man replied, “I see men; for I behold them as trees walking.” The Master

again lays His hands upon his eyes and bids him look up ; he looks and seeth the bright earth around him and the Son of God standing at his side. Even so it may be with you, if you will permit that Divine Friend to lead you "out of town" where sin and self have tasked and troubled you, and will entrust yourself to His restoring power. He will touch the eye of your soul. Truth will become clearer. Faith will become stronger. The old darkness will pass away, and all things will become new. "Thou hast well seen" when thou dost behold Jesus Christ as the Lord of thy life, His service thy sweetest occupation, and His presence thy perpetual joy.



**XII.**

**THE MIRACLE AT THE GATE  
BEAUTIFUL.**



## XII.

### THE MIRACLE AT THE GATE BEAUTIFUL.

“Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none ; but such as I have give I thee ; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.”—ACTS OF THE APOSTLES iii, 6.

THIS was one of the earliest miracles wrought by the apostles after the descent of supernatural gifts at the time of Pentecost. It was one of the most public in its character, and one of the most signal in its results. The actors were Peter and John—who seem to have been quite inseparable friends since the day on which Jesus sent them together to make ready for the Passover. Very different men were they in temper and disposition ; but for that reason none the less intimate. The closest intimacies are often formed by those who agree in their aims, but differ very widely in their temperament and mental habits.

Hand in hand those warm-hearted brothers go up to the temple at the hour of prayer. The sun is sloping toward the west, and its slant rays kindle into a blaze of glory the great central doorway of Corinthian brass. This is

the “Gate Beautiful”—superior in costliness and splendor to the other eight entrances to the temple. Through its magnificent portal a crowd is always pressing at the ninth hour of the day. The rich worshippers pass in there, and some of them may be expected to be charitable. Therefore, a poor cripple—lame from the hour when his mother held him in her arms—chooses that as the best time and place for asking alms of the passing crowd. An old familiar object he is to the most of them. They have seen that thin, pale countenance, those eager eyes, and the shrivelled limb sticking out from under the ragged robe a hundred times. They have tossed their farthings into that open palm; probably wondering, as we do, where the street-beggars eat their scanty meals, and where their wretched frames find shelter through the night.

This unfortunate cripple hails all the passers-by with his monotonous appeal, and seeing Peter and John come up, he “asked to receive an alms.” Peter stops short, and fastens his eye on him. According to the closer rendering of the original he “looks right *into* him.” And in there, behind the extended palm of squalid beggary he recognizes a *man*, a brother, a fellow-heir of immortality. “Now look on us,” says Peter to the mendicant. Expecting a gift, the cripple eagerly turns toward them. His hand is stretched out; his eyes are open,

and his expectation aroused. The penniless apostle—richer in piety and spiritual power than in purse—exclaims in touching tones, “Silver and gold have I none ; but what I have, give I to thee ; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, *walk!*” Mark the meaning of this combination. As the representative of Jesus the “Saviour,” of Christ the “anointed High Priest,” and in the name of Him who was the despised Nazarene, I command you to rise and walk ! Taking the crouching form by the hand and lifting it up, the poor creature stands erect. His feet and ankle-bones suddenly grow strong. But he cannot stand still ; he must try his new-found powers and he must give vent to his ecstasy of delight. With exultant leap and shout he breaks through the wondering crowd—pressing in toward the altar of that God whom he now approaches as a grateful worshipper. The people give way in astonishment. “Is not this the cripple who sat at the Gate Beautiful ?” Yet here he is walking and leaping and praising God ! Nor does he pour out his thanksgiving only toward heaven. He “holds Peter and John” also—clinging to them in grateful embrace as a rescued man from the yawning deep might throw himself with ecstasy and tears into the arms of his deliverer.

The crowd are filled with amazement and awe. Who are these two men ? What power

do they possess which has made this lame man to walk? Let us hear more about this strange miracle. And so with wondering minds and open ears they throng about the two apostles who are richer in gifts of healing than in gifts of gold. A vast congregation is extemporized on the spot to listen to Peter's extemporized discourse. Observe now the result. The poor cripple gets a happy restoration to soundness of limbs. Peter and John get the ears of the people. The people, in turn, get the precious and powerful message which Christ's ambassador proclaims to them. Here is the lesson taught us by the miracle—a lesson of *mutual helpfulness*. A Christian apostle helps a lame beggar. The beggar restored to health helps his deliverer in his holy work of preaching his glorious gospel. Both are helpers and instructors to the assembled multitudes. The lesson taught by this miracle has many applications; and several pearls of truth may be strung on the thread of this beautiful story.

I. Society is a school of mutual help. This is according to the Divine ordinance. One of the designs of our Creator in putting His earthly children in close contact and into mutual dependence is that they may bear one another's burdens, relieve each other's necessities, and contribute to each other's happiness. His ultimate purpose is to establish the Kingdom of God upon this earth, and mutual help is one

of the means of its establishment. No human life can be utterly isolated ; and only a fraction of manhood could ever be developed on a Crusoe's solitary island. "None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself."

This principle of mutual help has a very striking relation to the life of the household. At the very outset of our existence, in earliest infancy, parental love becomes a real miniature, though a feeble one, of the Divine Providence. The sweet, sacred word "mother" means life, medicine, protection and about all things else to the dependent child. In good, patient mother's arms the little mendicant finds its "Gate Beautiful." There is its garner of food—there its soft couch of repose—there its chest of cordials for hours of pain—there its playground of infant glee—there its harbor of refuge and stronghold of safety. God himself typifies His own tenderness when He says, "as one whom his mother comforteth so will I comfort you."

And does the receiver of all these parental bounties yield nothing in return ? Getting so much, does the little cherub (for the most ill-looking child is a cherub to the parent's eye) give nothing in return ? Tell me, ye who have held a budding immortality next to your throbbing bosom ; has that little nursling nursed no deep and holy thoughts, no sweet ecstasies, and no unutterable emotions in your

own breast? Thou lonely and meek-eyed mother, when through the long, long hours of absence from him who was at his daily toil or out upon the rocking deep, you grew sad and timid and lonesome—tell me, if you can, what a wealth of companionship you found in two little bright eyes, and the music of a merry tongue. And how brave you grew when you remembered that you were the guardian angel of that God-given treasure. When you began to teach the earliest lessons to your darling, did you not find that your child was educating you as rapidly as you were educating it? Have you learned no lessons of patience, as you bent over the crib where pain was moaning at the midnight hour—no lessons of self-control when you saw passion rising in that young breast—no lesson of unselfish love when you were ready to sacrifice time, and ease, and strength and rest for that darling's welfare? Ah, there are some of you here who have learned what God could nowhere else have taught you, when you swallowed down your tears over that little coffin, and hung (as in an awful dream) over that deep, deep grave that seemed to reach down into eternity! Thank God for children—living or dead, here or in heaven! A childless home is like a leafless, blossomless tree; the summer winds make no music through the boughs, and the summer sun ripens no fruit on the branches. A cradle is often a “gate beau-

tiful" in life, where the soul receives some of its most precious gifts of healing ; a gate through which the heart often finds its way up to the throne of God and out into the mysteries of the eternal world.

It is not only in the relation of parentage and childhood, but also in every other relation the family is a school of mutual help. Each member depends on every other. To-day the robust father holds the "wee laddie" on his knee, or leads him up the stairway of that schoolroom in which he is to be taught his alphabet. There is a to-morrow coming by and by when the lisper of the A B C will be the master of a home of his own—with an infirm, gray-haired parent dozing away his sunset years in an armchair. Each helps the other when and where help is most needed. And every word and deed of unselfish love comes back in fifty-fold blessing on its author. For God puts feeble babes, and sweet, invalid daughters and infirm, bedridden grandparents into our families for this purpose (among others) that the strong may bear the burden of the weak, and in bearing them, may grow stronger themselves in Bible graces. Invalids and children have their uses for the well-grown and the vigorous. In every Christian family the scene at the Beautiful Gate of Jerusalem's temple is repeated over and over again when the wise and the strong take the weaker by the

hand and say "rise up; I will help you walk!"

II. This same principle of mutual helpfulness applies to the community, which ought to be, in many respects, an enlargement of the household. The law of sympathy and brotherly kindness which control a well-ordered family ought to control society. The community is composed of the strong and the weak, of health-imparting Peters and Johns, and of poor crippled brethren and sisters who can only sit beside life's thoroughfares, and depend upon the aid of the healthy and the helpful. The present unequal distribution of wealth puts the rich in the minority as to numbers; but of the poorer classes there is a certain class of shiftless idlers who can work, and have a chance to work, but will not. Such should be compelled to labor or starve. The falsely-called "charity" which puts a premium on indolent imposters is a greater wrong to the receivers than to the bestowers. The air is full of controversies over social and labor problems. Christianity and the soundest political economy concur on these three points—viz: Employment and just wages for all who can labor and desire to labor; condign punishment for all who willfully refuse to labor; and wisely-directed charities for all the hopelessly crippled by age or bodily and mental infirmities.

But how can the helpless poor help the rich

and the well-provisioned? If they are unable to earn wages, are they not able to bestow any wages? I trow that they can; and the helpless poor may be as profitable to the rich in spiritual benefits as the rich can possibly be to them in their bestowments of benevolence. If any of you doubt this, try a very simple experiment. Sally out from your comfortable fireside on a wintry night, well equipped with a basket of provisions, a bundle of warm clothing and a Bible in your pocket—and direct your way to that obscure alley in which that sick bread-winner and his suffering family are hungering for food and still more for sympathy. It is a hard place to find. But the piercing cold has found it; poverty has found it; disease has found it; fevers or consumption have entered that rickety door already. Now unload your cargo of charity. Bring out the woolen jacket for that shivering lad; it warms him at once, but it sends a warmer glow also into your own heart when the lad floods you with his thanks. Now help that poor ghastly father to take the medicine you have brought him; slip your greenbacks into the hand of that pale wife and tell her what to do for that cough, which racks her wornout frame as the roaring night wind shakes their crazy attic. As you look around the wretched room, how ashamed you are that you ever utter complaints in your own well-furnished home. Here is re-

turn number *two*. You have learned a lesson of contentment. Now open your Bible, and read the fourteenth chapter of John to the listening group ; and as you go down on your knees, how heartily you can thank the dear Father of all that in His heavenly house are “many mansions” where hungry want and pinching pain never come, and where He will wipe away every tear from our eyes. Before you leave, be sure to secure that lad and that bright-eyed girl for your Mission School ; and when you meet them there on the next Sabbath, you find what wages God is paying you, “pressed down and running over into your bosom.” Have these poor dwellers in that attic paid you nothing back ? Have they not made your heart the richer and your life the more Christ-like ? Ah ! that dismal garret has been to you a “gate beautiful,” where your soul has found gifts of healing, when your hands brought a welcome balm to breaking hearts. You have learned that Peter and John were not the only Christians who have helped themselves when they said to the crouching cripple, “in the name of Jesus rise up and walk !”

III. If the law of charity is a law of mutual helpfulness, so is the law of labor. The employer bestows wages ; the employee bestows work. Neither one has the right to scrimp the other. There is throughout a mutual dependence and mutual aid ; what God hath

joined together, let no plutocrat and no demagogue put asunder. For example: one of you importing merchants needs a ship, and you order it to be created. At your bidding the hardy woodman in the pine forest of Maine wields his ax, and the anvils are ringing in the forge, and the weaver is driving the sail-cloth and the cordage through his looms. Now that superb vessel—which to her sailing master is a fleet ocean-steed, to her browned tars is a rocking home, to the merchant is a floating warehouse, to the political economist is a part of the circulating library of finance, and to the Christian is one of the olive-bearing doves of peace—that magnificent craft is the joint product of many scores of heads and hands. When the builder built it he at the same time built up the weal of hundreds of his fellowmen. Each one helped all the others.

If this be regarded as too commercial a view of the inter-dependence of employers and their employees to be preached from the pulpit, let me emphasize—a thoroughly Christian aspect of the question—which is too often overlooked. Every employer is far more dependent than he imagines on the moral and religious condition of those to whom he entrusts his business. Their spiritual interests are linked with his financial interests. Their integrity, their conscientious industry, their power to resist

temptation, and their loyalty to God's law, make them vastly more valuable to him. Is it no concern to you, my friend, whether your clerk spends his evenings in a theater or in a Young Men's Christian Association? Is it "none of your business" whether his companions are such as you may introduce to him, or only such as may waylay him at the street corners? Suppose that you should kindly introduce him to the public libraries and other institutions for the enrichment of his mind, and to the evening services of your church, where his soul may receive spiritual food, and to your own house, where he may be sheltered from temptation, and cured of his home-sickness—would there be no return of blessings on your own head? To every Christian merchant or banker or manufacturer, his place of business should be his parish, and his employees be regarded as the flock for whose spiritual welfare he is partially responsible. Although those who labor for you are not objects of charity like that poor mendicant at the "gate beautiful," yet if with the spirit of Christ you take them by the hand you may find that "the feet and ankle-bones" of their characters will "receive strength."

IV. The principle under discussion has a most direct application to the Christian Church. The primal law of that church is to glorify God by the service and salvation of His

earthly children. Peter and John went up to the temple on that afternoon to worship God ; and on their way they encounter this poor cripple at the temple gate. Their Christian instincts move them to pity the sufferer and then to heal him. Their Master had not entrusted them with a stewardship of silver and gold ; but He committed to them the higher trust of a power to restore the sick to health, and the dead to life. They simply did their duty when they extended a lifting hand to their pitiable fellow-creature ; and probably they had no expectation of the consequences that would follow the miracle. It may have been a happy surprise to them that their deed of love had arrested the popular eye, gained the popular ear, and prepared the popular heart to welcome Peter's proclamation of Jesus Christ, in whose name the wondrous miracle had been wrought.

From this incident let Christ's servants learn two important truths. The first is, that if they would win a hearing for their gospel message, they must begin by some word or deed of practical kindness to those whom they wish to convert. One Christ-like act is often worth a score of sermons. And when the key of kindness has unlocked the ears and heart, then the door is open for the most earnest, the most pungent, and the most soul-convicting truth to enter. With what tremendous power did

Peter stand up to preach Christ Jesus that day—with the healed cripple by his side, as the trophy of his beneficence and the credential of his apostleship. By that same key of kindness must the Church of Christ find their way to the most hardened heart around them. Every Christly deed brings an increment of power; and if the “Word of God is to grow mightily and prevail” in our day, it must be by the revival of the apostolic methods. Sinners may be drawn to Christ; they never can be driven.

The second lesson for us from this miracle, is that every child of sin, whom we may win to Jesus, becomes, from that time, a co-worker with us in advancing the kingdom and cause of our Master. The law of advance for that kingdom is growth, not conquest. The sinning and the suffering who throng the wayside of this world of ours—useless to themselves and to God—may, by the touch of Christianity, be transformed into living witnesses and workers for the truth. Come, oh thou flame of heavenly love, into our hearts, our tongues, and our hands! Then shall we see the crippled victims of sin around us, “walking and leaping and praising God!”

We have now gathered up a few of the lessons suggested by this simple, yet most sublime miracle; we have seen in it a beautiful illustration of *mutual helpfulness*. But as I

close this discussion, another vision presents itself to our wondering and adoring eyes.

I seem to see the wretched, dying race of man, crippled by sin and wasted by spiritual hunger, sitting by the gateway to a temple of heavenly purity which it is powerless of itself to enter. There sits depraved humanity, maimed, guilty, sin-sick, and perishing! ONE approaches, mighty to save. He comes with the kingliness of a God concealed in the lowly guise of the son of man. He halts. He pities. He stoops and sweetly says, "Look on **ME**!"

Stretching forth a hand pierced with the crucifying nail, he lifts the wretched object to its feet, exclaiming, "Rise up and walk!" And as the grateful creature clings to its restorer it beholds through its tears of joy that he is none other than the Son of God! Oh, blessed and adorable Jesus, thy cross, thy cross is the "Gate Beautiful" of salvation through which a redeemed race may enter into the Temple not made with hands, eternal in the heavens!



**XIII.**  
**THE GRACE OF SILENCE.**



## XIII.

### THE GRACE OF SILENCE.

“I was dumb with silence.”—PSALM xxxix, 2.

OR if we translate it still more literally, “I was silenced with dumbness.” The Psalmist adds to this “I held my peace.” A little farther on he says again, “I am silenced. I will not open my mouth, because Thou didst it.” A wise man was the Psalmist when he wrote these words. He knew what an unruly member a tongue often is; so he determined to “keep for his mouth a muzzle” while the prosperity of the wicked moved him to murmuring.

In these passages, David reiterates the grace of silence and upon this topic let us gather some suggestions for everyday use. There is a time to speak out, a time to be heard, when muzzled lips would betray cowardice and be treason to the truth. At such times “speech is silver,” but there are other occasions when “silence is golden.” And such occasions I will now point out to you.

I. The first occasion is when we are under the pressure of sheer inquisitiveness. There are some people who have a chronic itch of

curiosity ; they are the “busy-bodies in other men’s matters.” Instead of minding their own business, they pry into the affairs of their neighbors—not for the purpose of help, or sympathy, but for the gratification of insatiate curiosity. Now such persons ought not to be encouraged by being gratified. There are many things which we have a right to keep to ourselves, and which the public has no business with. Our newspapers (I am sorry to say) publish quite too often what ought to be private. Every man’s “house is his castle” ; if he chooses to let the whole community in, then he is responsible for the discoveries made—whether of silver on his table or of “skeletons in his closets.” A wise man will keep his own secrets ; the discreet and self-respecting will keep to themselves all those matters with which “the stranger” has no right to “intermeddle.” There are sore spots in almost every household that delicacy ought to conceal ; why allow unfeeling hands to increase their festering or make them bleed ? A thousand domestic difficulties, a thousand scandals would never get wind, if people were wise enough to padlock their own tongues about their own affairs. Be careful whom you make your confidants ; “a tale-bearer revealeth secrets ; but he that is of a trusty spirit concealeth the matter.” As for the crime of divulging what is entrusted to you in secret confidence, it is a crime compounded

of falsehood and treachery. Upon the whole subject two sound rules ought to be observed—one is : never to ask what you have no right to know—the other rule is never to tell other people what they have no right to know. So high was the apostle's estimate of the grace of silence that he declares that “if any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man and able also to bridle the whole body.”

II. A second occasion for silence is when you are strongly tempted to disparage others. Remember that the tongue is a sharp instrument ; it cuts deep, it often draws blood ; you may commit murder with it as truly as with a dagger or a pistol. Alas ! how many there are who limp along wounded, or carry the ugly scar which cruel slander has inflicted !

Wilful slander you will all detest, but a peculiar temptation to detraction often comes in this wise. We hear somebody extolled greatly ; he or she has won great success, or received high praise. Envy (that hateful spirit that often disguises itself under the name of “Justice”) says to us, “That person is set up too high ; he or she ought to be taken down.” So we set over against their virtues some deformities of character or some evil things that we know about them. Grant that we do know them—why speak of them ? Why fling a nasty “fly” into that sweet ointment ? When so fine a picture has been drawn,

why thrust a daub of detraction over it? Grant it, even farther, that the person thus extolled has once slighted or injured you, and here is a chance for retaliation. In the name of generosity, "hold your peace." If you cannot honestly join in the praise, do not let your tongue croak an envious discord; if you cannot help to set another up, do not endeavor to pull him down. Silence is sometimes as magnanimous as a speech of vindication is at other times. Nay, my dear friends, if we cannot sincerely say anything good about our fellow-creatures, is it not better to say nothing at all? "Throwing mud" is always dirty work; if you do not defile the individual you aim at, you are pretty sure to soil your own hands.

If you will only remember how you have smarted yourself, or suffered yourself from the razor tongue of defamation, you will surely learn to "bridle" your own tongue. Be careful lest in condemning another, you condemn not yourself, for that very blunt apostle, James, has warned us that "if any man seem to be religious and bridleth not his tongue, that man's religion is vain."

Silence (let me add here) is often the best answer to sharp things or offensive things said against us. If they are said in jest, laugh at them; if said spitefully, forgive them; if they are true, then let us secretly be thankful for the criticisms, and mend our ways.

III. Thirdly. If silence be golden under the circumstances of which I have already spoken—then does it shine with a peculiar luster when it is maintained under great provocation.

When our house takes fire, the first impulse is to go after a bucket of water. But if temper takes fire, the first impulse is to throw on more fuel. Now, the best water-bucket for aroused temper is resolute silence. If, whenever a provoking word were spoken to us, or an irritating act were done, or an injury struck us, we should firmly seal our lips for even ten minutes, we would save ourselves many a quarrel, many a heartburn, many a mortification, many a disgrace to our religious profession. Speech is often explosive and shattering. Silence is cooling. It cools us off, and cools other people. One of the calmest men I ever knew told me that he used to be violently passionate, but he broke his temper by resolutely bridling his tongue until he cooled down.

What answer that can be given to many an irritating word, and even to a just provocation, is as effective as dignified silence? What eloquence there is sometimes in lips sealed tight by self-control, by patient fortitude, by the serene sense of right! What sublimity there is in silence when innocence reviled, reviles not again! How divine was the silence of our ador-

able Master, when, under all the buffetings and insults of His brutal enemies, He opened not His holy lips! Those lips might have summoned legions of angels to His rescue! That tongue might have shot the lightnings of heaven into the fiendish crowd of persecutors who hunger for His blood. "Answerest thou nothing?" exclaimed the enraged High Priest. "But Jesus held His peace." Then Pilate breaks in, "Answerest thou nothing? behold, how many things they witness against Thee!" But Jesus yet "answered not a word." Other men have died for what they have said. Here was a personage who died for what He would not say, and was calmly silent. Wonderful composure! Wonderful silence of conscious innocence and divine holiness! Wonderful patience of the Son of God! "He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth!"

Having reached this sublimest of all illustrations of silence before men, let us go on to consider the grace of silence toward God. At first sight the question may arise, can this ever be a virtue? Does not God demand perpetual confession and perpetual praise? "Open thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth thy praise; let everything that hath breath praise the Lord."

Yet the very same Psalter which contains

these repeated calls to adoration and thanksgiving contains such passages as those now before us. "I was silenced with dumbness! I held my peace even from good things." "I am silenced! I will not open my mouth, because thou didst it!" Lo! David the singer has become David the silent! The great musician is mute! the harp is hung up! The most eloquent of his generations is speechless? And why? Is his heart so bowed down and so utterly broken that he becomes dumb? This does not explain the case. Grief does indeed sometimes strike the sufferer dumb, and congeals the very fount of tears, so that they cannot weep. I have seen such, to whom the very relief of tears seemed to be denied. But David's silence was not of that character; he has told us why he opened not his mouth. He had come up face to face with this tremendous fact. "Thou didst it!" Jehovah of Hosts had laid his hand heavily on David's back, and the Psalmist laid his own hand on his mouth. "I am silenced now; I will quiet myself as a child that is weaned of its mother."

Ah! my friends, it is a glorious discovery that we make when we discover God's hand in an experience of joy or an experience of sorrow. If a fellow-man has done us a wrong, we may kindle into resentment; we may scold at his stupid blunder, or vent our indignation at his

willful unkindness. But when we come up to face our Heavenly Father and recognize His great over-shadowing hand, then there is nothing for us but silence and submission ! Further questionings will do us no good ; for God keeps his own secrets. Murmuring will do us no good, but only aggravate our sorrows. Rebellion is ruin. Push as far as we can, press as hard as we may, we cannot get beyond this tremendous truth: God did it, God did it ! Grasp that truth, hold to that truth, and open your soul's eyes to that truth and you have learned what ?

First, you have learned that an all-wise Father did it. There was no hap-hazard blunder about that stroke.

Why God's treatment of me was wise I do not comprehend any more than your little boy comprehends the inner works of a clock when he looks at its face and reads the figure "VIII." Then he says, "It is time to go to school." He accepts the fact without going behind it. This tangled web of God's providence I am not wise enough to unravel. God's wisdom can and will.

My poor

"Blind unbelief is sure to err  
And scan His work in vain,  
God is His own interpreter  
And He will make it plain."

His own command is, "Be still and know

that I am God!" Another glorious thought is wrapped up in these words, "Thou didst it." Then a loving Father did it. That is a precious discovery, for we can bear almost anything if we are sure that love is behind it. Love never wrongs us. Love never tortures us. Love never robs us. Love never lays on us a needless load. The love that "spared not His own Son" can be trusted behind the heaviest blow or the darkest cloud. But some of you may say, "I cannot understand how a loving Father could lay His hand on me so heavily." Good friend! This is not the world to unravel mysteries in, or get explanations from God. Heaven is the world for enlarged knowledge. There "we shall know even as we have been known."

In this world the great purpose is the development of character. This is the school-life. You and I are little scholars. And when the Almighty, all-wise Teacher is speaking, the child should keep still. When He appoints us hard lessons, we should learn them. The mightiest lesson to be learned in this world is to let God have His way. Your brain and my brain are not big enough to comprehend the mysteries of Divine Providence; but your heart and my heart may trust Him enough to say: I will submit! I am silenced! I open not my mouth because Thou didst it!

A most rare and difficult grace is this grace

of silence before God, but it is one of the most beautiful. None is more pleasing to God ; none is more attractive before the world , none does more to finish and beautify character. But, Oh ! we shrink from the process of acquiring it ! How often we pray, " let this cup pass from me." None of us loves to suffer ; none of us loves to have his plans defeated, or his house emptied, or his treasures taken away ! We shudder at the sight of the surgical knife which our loving Father is using upon us. But when He who wounds in order to heal is engaged in amputating a wicked lust, or cutting off a diseased limb of pride, or cutting out an ulcer of sin, our duty is to hold still. "Keep still, my friend ! keep still," says the surgeon to the soldier. Restlessness only endangers a false cut of the knife, and aggravates the process. The soldier is not now in the hands of a murderous enemy, but of a kind, skilful friend. So if he be wise he will reply, " Doctor ! do as you like ; I'll try to keep still. Go as deep as you can ; but only be sure to bring out the bullet."

Ah ! brethren ! the battlefield often costs less suffering and requires less courage than the hospital. So in the spiritual conflicts of life the onsets of duty, with bugles sounding and drums beating, do not so test the metal of our graces as it does to be thrown down wounded and to be carried to the rear. Do-

ing is always easier than bearing ! Activity is more than quiet submission. To shout the battle-cry or huzza from the battlements is easier than to put our hands on our mouths and sit down speechless because "God does it ! "

My hearers ! This is one of the most practical of themes that I am presenting to you to-day. Everyone of us has occasion to practice silence before God, everyone of us should be learning when to keep still. Everyone of us is confronted with the mysteries of God's dealing, with ourselves and with others. If He is silent as to explanations of His course, we must be silent in our unquestioning submissions. If we do not know the "whys" and the "wherefores" God does.

"He knows the bitter, weary way,  
The endless strivings day by day—  
The souls that weep—the souls that pray:  
He knows.

"He knows ! Oh, thought so full of bliss,  
For though on earth our joys we miss,  
We still can bear it, feeling this:  
He knows.

"God knows ! Oh, heart, take up thy cross  
And learn earth's treasures are but dross,  
And He will turn to gain our loss:  
He knows ! He knows ! "

I have been recounting some of the many occasions in life when it is the course of wis-

dom to keep still. Silence is the requisite of a good listener; let us hear what other people can tell us. Above all let us be still and hear what our Heavenly Father shall say to us. Silence is the best state for meditation; if we thought more and talked less, we should be better worth hearing when we did speak. Silence is a sedative to the soul; murmuring and quarreling with God only tears sorrows open and keeps them festering. Fellow-students in God's school! You and I are being educated for eternity. Some things we can know; we can know God and trust Him. We can know Jesus and love Him. We can know our Bibles and follow them. And what we know not now we shall know hereafter.

One of the greatest of living preachers\* has beautifully told us that "over the arched gate of the Spanish Alhambra there is sculptured an open hand; over the next arch a key. The haughty Moors who held that palace-fort for so many years used to boast that the gate of the Alhambra never would be opened to the Christians until that hand should take that key. Many a Providence, like that Moorish fortress, contains within its frowning battlements, sparkling fountains of living waters. How many of you have been forced to stand before one of God's heart-trying mysteries—to stand silent—opening not the mouth because

\* Rev. Dr. Marvin R. Vincent.

‘Thou didst it !’ Oh, my friend, stand still a little longer ! stand not in despair, but in patient hope ! By and by the hand will take the key ; the gate shall open into the heart of the Providence, and behind the stern ‘Thou didst it’ shall be revealed everlasting love and everlasting peace.”

“Sometime when all life’s lessons have been learned  
And sun and stars forever more have set,  
The things which our weak judgments here have  
spurned,  
The things o’er which we grieved with lashes wet,  
Will flash before us, out of life’s dark night,  
As stars shine most in deeper tints of blue ;  
And we shall see how all God’s plans are right,  
And how what seems reproof was love most true.

“But not to-day. Then be content, poor heart !  
God’s plans, like lilies pure and white unfold.  
We must not tear the close-shut leaves apart,  
Time will reveal the calyxes of gold.  
And if through patient toil we reach the land  
Where tired feet with sandals loosed, may rest,  
When we shall clearly know and understand,  
I think that we will say, ‘God knew the best.’ ”



**XIV.**  
**SPIRITUAL HEALTH**



## XIV.

### SPIRITUAL HEALTH.

“ Whataileth thee ? ”—JUDGES xviii, 23.

THE Bible was not written for saints in heaven. It was written for struggling, tempted, sinning and sorrowing mortals in this world. The loftiest Christians portrayed on its pages were by no means perfect ; some of them made lamentable slips and falls ; their finest gold of character was not without alloy. Human nature has not changed since the times when even the chiefest of Christ’s Apostles could honestly confess, “ I have not already attained nor am I already made perfect.”

If you were all whole and all happy, you would not need any spiritual physician. But I suspect that there are many aching hearts in this assembly, many “ weak hands and feeble knees,” and many who are sadly crippled by besetting sins. To each of you who is unhappy, and to each one who is unhealthy, I may address the same question which was addressed to Micah by the Danites, who had stolen away his household gods, “ *What aileth thee?* ” If you will turn to this eighteenth chapter of the

Book of Judges (in which my text is found) you will see how the Danite marauders had broken into poor Micah's private chapel of idols, and had carried off his graven images. Perhaps this is the trouble with some of you. Your hearts have been made, not the dwelling-place of Jesus Christ by his Spirit, but a private chapel in which you have enshrined favorite idols. They have absorbed your affections and shut your Saviour out from the central throne of your heart. Perhaps your idol has been money, a very useful article when a Christian holds it in trust for the honor of his Master, but a terrible curse when it owns and enslaves a Christian. This idol, like Micah's, was a movable article, and it is gone ! Brother, you are not a pauper ; stop and count up the precious things you still possess, and the treasures that cannot be stolen away, or swallowed up by commercial disasters. God may have permitted your income to be cut down in order to enrich you with graces better than gold. Instead of whining and weeping over your heap of broken projects, use them as a stepping stone to climb up into a higher and holier life, closer to God. What is true of money, may be equally true of any other subject, or of any other person, that your heart may enshrine in that inner sanctum, which of right belongs to your Redeemer ; and if the loss of heart-idols serves to cure you of inordinate love of

them, then it is a spiritual blessing to lose them.

Another may answer the question, "What aileth thee?" by saying, "I have had some bitter disappointment." Either you have not got what you wanted, or when you did get it, it did not meet your expectations. Perhaps you chose a certain path for yourself, and God hedged you up or sent you off very reluctantly into some other way. This has started your tears, or soured your spirit. Now, as I look back over my own life, I can discover that some of the richest mercies my Heavenly Father has ever bestowed, have come in the shape of bitter disappointments. It has been truly remarked that "disappointment never means wreck when God's hand is in it. There is often a lift in that ugly thing." Disappointment, like fire, has a double power; it may scorch and crisp and blast a man, or else it may thaw out his blood, and quicken his life. It is a more heroic triumph of grace for a Christian to rise above the billows of adversity than it is to run, with flying colors, before a fair breeze of constant successes. Probably it suits the inclination of all of you to be up in the world, but it is not always safe; and it is a wholesome process to be "taken down" occasionally. The grass in my yard has a tendency to grow rank and it requires to be taken down by a mower; and it never looks so well as after the sharp cut-

ter has gone over it. Many a Christian never appears as attractive in his graces as when God's mowing machine has gone over him ; his pride, or his self-confidence or his worldly ambition needed the scythe. Even Paul himself would not have grown up so strong from the roots if he had not been mowed pretty often. We suspect that God discovered the peril he was in of becoming "exalted beyond measure" so he sent a thorn in the flesh to humble him. It is quite possible that the Lord saw what a dangerous place for Joseph was that luxurious house of Potiphar, and therefore the young Hebrew was sent to a prison, which proved to be the training school for the palace. Remember that the very name "God" signifies good, and you may yet discover that he has never been so truly kind to you as when he crossed your inclination, or when he chastised your waywardness. The map of our lives will be an interesting study in heaven.

But yonder sits another excellent brother, a Sabbath school teacher, or an active member of the Young People's Association, or some other organization for doing good, and he is becoming rather disheartened in his work. He does not see the results that he hoped for. Is this anything new ? Isaiah complained that he "had labored in vain and spent his strength for naught." Martin Luther died with a broken heart over the hindrances that ob-

structed the progress of the Protestant Reformation. Saint Cecilia was ready to break her harp when she overheard the music of the angels. Are you conscientiously working for your Master and for the souls of your fellow-men? Then leave results with the Master; He is responsible for them. It is your business to sow precious seed, and with all your anxious fingering you cannot make it come up. You never know just how much good you may be doing when you do any thoroughly good deed. Nothing pleases the devil more than to put a working Christian away in a wet blanket; that sort of hydropathy has chilled to death more than one excellent undertaking.

Let me now turn the lens away from the unhappy hearts to those who are *unhealthy*. The word "holiness" is synonymous with the old Saxon word *wholth*, or health; therefore, a holy person is one who has been healed by the Divine Physician and is in a sound spiritual condition. There must be something wrong with a church member who does not grow in grace, or bear the fruits of the Spirit. During my many years of hospital practice (which is a considerable part of every pastor's work) I have found that there is a numerous class of weak-handed, low-pulsed, and feeble-kneed Christians who are self-made invalids. Their spiritual debility is the direct result of their own sins, either of omission or commission.

The same principle applies to spiritual as to physical hygiene ; disease is often the inevitable punishment of the violation of the laws of health. Is not the inebriate's poisoned frame the immediate legacy of his bottle ? The indolence which never earns its daily bread cannot earn the appetite to enjoy it ; the gluttony which gorges the stomach is often only a fattening of an early banquet for the worm. Dyspepsia is frequently found to be a divinely-appointed health officer, stationed at the gateway of excess, to warn off all comers, and to punish those who will persist in entering the forbidden ground. Spiritual dyspepsia is, in most cases, the result of sin indulged or of duty neglected. How can a Christian be healthy who neglects a wholesome diet for his soul, or who seldom does a "stitch" of work for his Master ? How can his faith be strong who seldom enters his closet ? The constipation of charity soon becomes chronic when selfishness locks its purse against the most eloquent appeals. My dyspeptic friend, I commend to you the double remedy—Bible diet and Bible duty. If these don't restore you, then your case must be past all medication.

Brother A—, what aileth thee ? Judging from the symptoms, you are suffering from a fever. One of the symptoms of fever is loss of appetite for food, and another is an inordinate thirst. Your appetite for gospel food is

sadly low, and your thirst for worldly gain is becoming insatiable. The more you swallow, the thirstier you are. The spirit of covetousness, when it gets full sweep in the heart, carries down so much deposit that it silts up the soul with a sand-bar, and no freights of benevolence can ever "cross the bar." The Bible abounds in solemn admonitions against this sin.

A kindred disease with the greed for wealth is an ambition for social display—a style of prominence that is often secured at the cost of one's spiritual peace and power. There is a "getting up in the world" that ends in a getting down in the kingdom of Christ. Jesus rebuked such selfish aspirations when He said, "Whosoever of you would be chiefest, shall be the servant of all." True promotion comes from the promotion of the welfare of others; he is the greatest who achieves the greatest amount of good in the community. Do not wait, my friend, for God to prescribe for thy fevers by depleting thy purse, or by humbling thy crest. Consecrate to Him thy money and thy social influence, and enjoy a new sensation. Our philanthropic millionaire, of Brooklyn, the late Charles Pratt, once said to me, "There is no greater humbug in this world than the idea that the mere possession of wealth can make any man happy. I never got any solid satisfaction out of mine until I began

to do good with it." It is not what we take up, but what we give up, that will yield us treasures in Heaven.

Brother B——, what aileth thee? Perhaps, the all-seeing eye discovers the growing cancer of a besetting lust. There is but one remedy for that—it is the knife. Speedy and thorough repentance—proved by abandonment of the darling sin—can alone restore thee. If thy hand cause thee to offend, cut it off; if thine eye, then pluck it out! It is better to go maimed on the road to Heaven than to lose the life everlasting. The vines that yield the largest and most luscious clusters have felt the keenest incisions of the pruning-knife. Shall the Divine Husbandman be compelled to use it, or wilt not thou make short and sharp work with thy besetting sins?

Here is another professed servant of Christ who is "sick with the palsy." His paralyzed hands accomplish no work; his tongue is so paralyzed that he is no longer heard in the place of prayer; nay, there is but little more left of him than his idle name on the church register. To such as thee the Master speaks the short authoritative command, "Arise, take up thy bed and walk"; you need the movement cure. The first sincere prayer of contrition that you utter, the first temptation you resist, the first step you take to honor Christ, breaks the spell. As soon as you arouse from that

self-begotten paralysis of sloth, your feet and ankle-bones will receive strength, and you may go on your way rejoicing.

Much of the spiritual debility in our churches arises from the ignoring of a very simple principle, viz: that every creature on this earth is dependent. All vegetable life depends on the soil beneath it, and the atmosphere around it. Shut up the most stalwart man in a cell without food and water, and in a few hours he is a corpse. No one can keep alive his own body by sheer self-sustentation ; and God's word declares that "*none can keep alive his own soul.*" Some members of a Christian Church commit the sad mistake of trying to live on a past experience. They believe that they were once converted, and that is enough ; they insist that they were once "*born anew,*" and having publicly confessed Christ, why should they feel any apprehensions about their own salvation. I have known hundreds of bright infants that are slumbering soundly under the turf in Greenwood Cemetery to-day. The attempt to maintain a Christian life on the bygone experience of conversion, is as absurd as an attempt to subsist on the milk fed to you in the nursery a score of years ago. The vital question for each one of us is, *am I alive now?* If alive, how shall my life be maintained ? How shall I grow in grace ?

I. The first source of a healthy life is good

food for the soul. The more nourishing the food and the better the digestion the stronger do we become. Some Christians die of starvation. They surfeit the inner man with secular stimulants of all sorts—with spiced books of fiction, with “light reading” that is mere sillabub. Many swallow little else than their daily newspaper. The moral faculties become debilitated on this flimsy diet. Now all the athletic Christians—all those who can carry heavy loads, do thorough work and stand a long pull—are hungry feeders on God’s Book. Nothing will impart sinew and muscle to your piety like the thorough study and digestion of your Bible. A good sermon must be digested or it will be of little use to you, and your daily bread of the Bible must go through the same process in order that it may be assimilated and taken into your spiritual fiber. “Thy words were found and *I did eat them*, and they were the joy of mine heart,” said the old-time saint. Every growing Christian is a *ruminating* animal ; he chews Bible truths and nutritious sermons and wholesome books and other such provender, as the cow cheweth her cud. One strong Bible text lodged in the memory, and turned over and over and well digested, will be a breakfast for your soul, and in the strength of it you go through the whole day. A soldier is never in so good trim for battle as after a sound sleep and a square

morning meal ; it is not easy to fight or to march on an empty stomach. In like manner, every servant of Jesus Christ must recruit his or her spiritual strength by reading Christ's words, and *thinking* about them, by meditation, by prayer and soul converse with God. Martin Luther, in the thick of his campaigns with the Pope and the devil, said that he could not get on without two good hours each day for his private devotions. I have always observed that the light readers and light thinkers make light Christians, and those who neglect their Bibles and their closets soon dwindle into dwarfs. Having no depth of root their religion withers away.

II. A second promoter of spiritual life is good air for your soul to breathe. A soul requires oxygen as much as the body. Have you not noticed how an audience will drop off into listlessness, and some of them into slumber, when the oxygen has become exhausted in the room ? The fetid air of some railway cars is poison to the lungs. Our souls have lungs also, and you cannot keep them in health while you are in the atmosphere of a business that has trick or gambling in it ; or in the atmosphere of amusements which stimulate sensual passions ; or in any sort of atmosphere which puts conscience to sleep, and benumbs your moral sensibilities. Orange trees do not thrive in Labrador, or tuberoses bloom in snow.

banks. Just as soon expect to make your graces thrive by taking your soul out of fellowship with Christ and steeping it in the hot air of selfish schemings, or in the poisonous air of social frivolities. I have noticed that when young converts begin to exchange their prayer meetings for convivial clubs, the theater, etc., they soon wither away. Bad atmosphere stunts their religion, sometimes kills it. Christians have got to mingle with the world in a thousand ways, and yet they must "keep *unspotted* from the world." Daniel kept his heart clean in the atmosphere of a wicked court, and a city missionary may keep clean in the slums. But there are certain boggy places in business life, and politics, and social life, where you cannot set your foot without sinking in; there is a certain line beyond which a Christian cannot venture without betraying his Master. Never venture a single inch into any business however lucrative, or any speculation however attractive, or any social circles however fascinating, if you cannot carry Christ with you and a clean conscience. Remember that Christ is your life, and without Him "no man can keep alive his own soul."

III. Exercise, of course, is as essential to spiritual as it is to physical health. There is great pith in the apostle's injunction, "*Exercise thyself unto godliness.*" God has intrusted to you (not given them to you "in fee

simple") certain powers, faculties, possessions, and capacities for His service. For want of use these limbs of the soul may become as powerless as the legs of a fever patient three weeks in a hospital. Inactivity is the "dry rot" of thousands of church members. You will never gain a good appetite for God's Word, or a flush of joy on your countenance, until you lay hold of some earnest, self-denying work and keep at it. Nothing will impart such a holy vehemence to your prayers as to spend an hour by a sick bed, or in close labor with an impenitent heart. Nothing will stiffen your muscle more than tough up-hill work in behalf of some unpopular cause or moral reform. The only cure for indolence is honest work; the only cure for selfishness is self-sacrifice; the only cure for timidity is to plunge into duty before the shiver benumbs you; the only cure for unbelief is to put Christ to the test every day. Prayer must kill unbelief or else unbelief will kill prayer. The christian warfare is not a single pitched battle; it is a campaign for life. You may often imagine that you have attended the funeral of some besetting sin—and lo! it was on its feet again next morning! You will not fire the last shot until the gates of glory welcome you in among the crowned conquerors.

Important as food and good air and active exercise are in themselves, yet the chief main-

tenance of your Christian life is the *constant indwelling* of the Spirit of Jesus Christ in your soul. He is the divine fire to keep you warm, the divine flame to burn out your lusts and corruptions, the divine power to propel all your activities. Quench not Christ's Spirit! Depend on it that your soul will soon wither unless it is "hid with Christ in God." As carefully as you lock money in a safe, or hide a diamond out of the reach of a thief, hide your innermost hope and heart in the safe keeping of your Saviour! If you become a part and parcel of the Lord Jesus—as every true Christian is—then because **HE** lives you shall live forever also.

It is a glorious truth that Jesus Christ came into this sin-sick world not only to give life, but that those who secure it may "have it more abundantly." Those who long for this more abundant life and seek for it aright may possess it. One evidence will be an increase of faith. A feeble faith may move a mole-hill, but it cannot stir a mountain. It can say "*perhaps* God may hear me," or "*perhaps* I may be delivered from this quagmire of doubts and difficulties." Now faith is just the taking in of Christ into the soul, and the more of Christ the more strength. To grapple with stubborn sins, to conquer debilitating doubts, to carry a heavy load, to take hold of "hard cases" and try to bring them to Christ, to do

all such feats is given to those who are filled with might in the inner man. Luther spent three hours a day in prayer that he might have the stamina for his wrestle with the giant on "the seven hills." Charles G. Finney tells us in his autobiography how he was pleading with God to remove the difficulties that obstructed his path, until he says that "his flesh trembled on his bones and he shook from head to foot." Then there came a full tide of assurance into his soul, a "great lifting up," and a sweet calm of entire trust; from that room he went forth into one of the most powerful revivals that he ever witnessed. The pastor who believably asks for a rich harvest and steeps his Gospel-seed in prayer, will not come into the Lord's barns with an empty wagon. Let the Sunday-school teacher pin this promise into his or her class-book: "All things are possible to him that believeth."

(2) With this increase of faith will come an increase of spiritual vigor. When I found that a tree in my yard bore more blossoms than fruit, I had the gardener dig around it, and put a bushel or two of fertilizer to reach its roots, and the next July it was crimsoned on every limb with ripe cherries. The more abundant life in the tree yielded the more abundant fruit. The simple reason why any Christian does not yield the fruits of the Spirit is the lack of inward vigor. The soil of his soul has

become impoverished. He needs the tillage of prayer and honest self-examination, the sub-soiling of repentance and a new inpouring of the Spirit of Christ. "If a man abide in Me, he shall bring forth much fruit."

It is the debilitated folk who catch all the fevers that are going, and a physician can do little for a patient who has not vitality enough to slough off the disease. An immense proportion of all our church-members are in the hospitals, or off on furlough, or too feeble to carry a weapon. Their disease is a low vitality, and some are dying of "heart failure." The only recovery of all those pitiable invalids must come from the tonic which Jesus Christ gives when He gives His quickening Spirit. There is really no such thing as a genuine *revival* for a Christian or for a church except by a *living again* of Christ in their souls, and a *living again* for Christ in their daily conduct. Listen, oh, ye invalids and impotent folk and idlers, to this trumpet-call of the Master: "I am come that ye might have life, and that ye may have it *more abundantly!*"

(3) With this increased vigor of heart-life will come more genuine joy. There is no sunshine for those who persist in keeping their shutters barred. Joy is not gained by the asking for it, but only by the *acting* for it; we have got to walk with Christ if we want to

walk in the sunshine. There is a lamentable lot of moping and grumbling and sour-spirited Christians who disgrace the name they bear. If one of this sorry regiment should ask a shrewd man of the world to embrace Christianity, he might well reply: "No, I thank you; I have troubles enough now without being troubled with such a peevish and doleful religion as yours seems to be." What a letter of recommendation some Christians carry in their cheerful countenances! What a brace of joyous prisoners were those two Apostles who sang their duet down in Philippi's dungeon at midnight! Those early Christians managed to draw oil out of the flintiest rocks—and the dark waves of persecution phosphoresced with the sparkles of a holy gladness. They were filled with Christ, and their joy was brimming over.

Now here are three things which you, the ailing souls, most need: more faith, more vigor, more joy in the Holy Spirit. Your Divine Physician offers them to you, if you will accept them; but you must let Him bestow them in His own way and on His own terms. A happy day would it be in all our churches if the fever-patients and the emaciated dyspeptics and the restored paralytics would come trooping out of the hospitals and report themselves for duty!

You have been long enough gasping for breath, my dear friends ; now throw open your whole souls to Jesus and then “shall your light break forth as the morning, and your *healing* shall spring forth speedily.”

**XV.**

**CHARACTER TESTED—AND DE-  
TECTED.**



## XV.

### CHARACTER TESTED—AND DE- TECTED.

“God left him to *try* him, that he might know all that was in his heart.”—II CHRONICLES xxxii, 31.

NEXT to the study of this blessed book, and of Him who gave us this book, I know of none more important than the study of human character. Every man is apt to have his favorite study—some speciality that engages his most eager attention. An astronomer lives in the heavens; his converse is with Orion and the seven stars. While the star-student ascends, the geologist descends to examine the rocks and the strata. His thoughts are of the trilobites and the primitive formations. A fascinating study; but the “primitive formation” of character, and the hidden caverns of motive and the several strata of habits (good or evil) which are all the while accumulating—can he safely neglect these? Here comes the botanist, fragrant with flowers—with a portfolio full of the autographs of the Creator—His handwriting on the cunning hibiscus leaf, the Victoria Regia lily and the imperial rose.

But the budding of character, the flowering out of heart-grace—the eradication of sin's weeds from the heart-garden—surely here is work for Him too.

The merchant looks every morning for commercial news. Ah ! he might sometimes seek for tidings from within as well as from abroad ! The mechanist is busy with his inventions. But is there a chronometer whose springs display the subtle delicacy of the inner springs that move human conduct ? Is there an engine imprisoned in the womb of the sea-going steamer, or palpitating through its fiery course on the railway track that equals in fervor or in power the throb of a great human heart ?

The statesman is absorbed with the management of states and empires. But how to rule the heart-realm—how to keep it in subjection to the King of kings—how to dislodge sin and encourage holiness—this is employment worthy of the most gifted intellect. Here is an occupation for every one of us. For the discipline of the human heart affords one of the grandest arenas on which God expends the Divine wisdom and exercises the Divine love. To cultivate the soul of man for the highest ideal of life on earth and for a higher life in Heaven, is a chief part of God's providential dealings with us. He "tries the reins." He tests the heart. He discovers to us our unsuspected frailties and vices of character. And

by the combination of discovery and discipline,  
He trains His children to graduate into eternal  
glory.

This is the subject to which I now invite you. A fruitful subject and a practical. My text affords an admirable illustration of character tested and weakness exposed. It was Hezekiah's character which was tested ; it was Hezekiah's own eye which was made to discover Hezekiah's own weaknesses.

How does God deal with the backsliding king ? He so orders it that ambassadors are sent to Hezekiah from the heathen city of Babylon. They come in pomp and barbaric splendor ; and with pomp and splendor Hezekiah receives them. He escorts them through his palace. He exhibits to them the temple of God with its utensils of solid gold. All the glory is displayed, and that glory is taken to himself. God is not even mentioned. There is no acknowledgment on the part of the king that Jehovah is his God, and that these are the symbols of His worship and, in fact, all the treasures about him are the gift of God's love. No mention is made of the religion of his fathers by the forgetful monarch. Like too many, he hides away his religion under the hatchway, while he displays the magnificence of his vessel. Now God "left him" to do all this "to try him," and that the king might "know all that was in his heart."

What a heart was discovered ! What an amount of pride and of self-conceit ! How little is he like the penitent Hezekiah who not long before had been moaning on his bed of sickness and devoutly praying to God for recovery. Then God was all in all. Now He is ignored completely ! Even this shameless ingratitude—even all this self-sufficiency and pride were in Hezekiah's heart. God left him to himself to try him, and very soon the discovery is made.

You will observe that a practical test was necessary to answer the purpose. This is God's plan. He employs actual trial as the most thorough detector and also as the most thorough discipliner of the heart. Whether He would bring out the unsuspected evil qualities or the unknown good qualities of a man He employs the same practical test.

For example : when Peter the boastful is to be made sensible of his own presumption and inconstancy, does Christ rebuke him for that braggart speech, "though all men should forsake Thee, yet will not I ?" No ! He simply "leaves him" in Pilate's judgment hall. Leaves him standing by that fire—for the servant maid to hurl into his teeth the taunt, "thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth."

When Jehovah wished to bring out the latent faith in Abraham's heart, He commands

him to Mount Moriah and to offer up there his well-beloved son Isaac.

Now in each of these two signal cases there was a test of character. Each of these two individuals got a look into his own heart. God left them to themselves to "try" them. They were just permitted to develop their own interiors. One of them came out of the test a far less courageous man than he claimed to be. He provoked the tingling rebuke of Christ, and his own tears of shame.

The other—majestic Abraham—received the approbation of his heavenly Father—"Now I know that thou lovest God, seeing that thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son Isaac." That trial displayed more faith, perhaps, than Abraham had given himself credit for. And certainly Peter was forced to abate his own self-exaggeration as a hero.

With these Scriptural illustrations of our text, let us look at the several truths involved in it.

I. And the first truth is that within every heart lies a whole world of undiscovered territory—a vast amount of undeveloped character. Happy the man who often plays the Columbus to his own soul !

Each heart contains a vast amount of undeveloped character. It is there, but the owner is not aware of it. If he suspects its

existence, he does not know its extent. Abraham did not know how much of faith he possessed until he was called to flash the naked blade over the breast of his darling son. Nor knew Moses the extent of his own meekness until he was tried with the “contradictions” of those stubborn sinners in the wilderness. Judas may have fancied himself equal to the fair average of honesty till the bag was entrusted with him and the chief priests began to tamper with his conscience. Peter insisted and stoutly, too, on his own courage and constancy, till God discovered to him the flaw in the iron—and there the iron broke! All along that flaw had existed in Peter’s character. It may have been constitutional. But what was needed for the disciple was that he should know it. That was a part of the divine training of him for his apostleship. It was needful that Satan “sift” him, in order that the church should have “the wheat”—the Devil got only his chaff.

This truth of undeveloped character is just as true now as in the olden days of Bible history. For the hearts of men are generically as similar as human faces. The undeveloped part of our character is the very part from which we may expect the greatest danger. The undetected flaw lets the axle break when the locomotive is spinning over the track at forty miles per hour—and hence the frightful

wreck of cars, freight and human lives. And never are we in greater peril than when dashing along in high success amid the gaze and admiration of all on-lookers. At such times, look out for the axle.

The secret defects of character work the greatest mischief to us. There they lie—away down in the hidden recesses of the soul. They lie dormant—like certain seeds that will remain in the bosom of the earth for a prodigious length of time until some application is made to them. Then they spring up. If no awakening substance touches them, they slumber on unseen and unknown forever.

They tell us that in Scotland is a battle-field on which the natives of the soil and their Saxon neighbors once met in terrible conflict. No monument marks the scene of the bloody fight. All over the field grows the beautiful Scotch heather—except in one spot. There a little blue flower grows abundantly. No flowers like them are to be found for many a league around. Why are they there? The reason is this. Just in the spot where they grow, the bodies of the slain were buried, and the earth was saturated with the blood and the remains of the unhappy victims. The seeds of these flowers were there before. As soon as the blood touched them, they sprung up. They developed. And every blue flower on Culloden's field, as it bends to the breeze, is

a memorial of the brave warriors who dyed that heathery sod with their crimson gore.

So is it with character. The seeds of action lie deep beneath the surface—seeds of heroism and the seeds of crime. The seeds of lofty deeds yet unperformed—or of sensualities, frauds, and treacheries yet unperpetrated. These principles, or germs of action, lie dormant. They may remain latent for years—for a lifetime—may (in fact) never be developed in this lower world. The seeds of the blue flowers at Culloden would, probably, have lain there undetected to this day, but for the trickling about them of human blood. That called them forth.

Benedict Arnold was for many years a patriot above reproach. No one endured the long marches through the pine forests of Maine and Canada better than he. Had he perished in those forests he would have left a name to be linked with the names of Knox and Schuyler, of Wayne and Marion. But when British gold glittered before his eyes, and he found himself deeply in debt, then the latent devil broke forth. The seed sprouted as soon as the gold touched it. The inward lust broke out into hideous treason, and the gallant hero of the northern forests sank into the outcast traitor of West Point. He found out (the whole world, too) “what was in his heart.”

There is a kindred example in the biography of David. We do not read that the Jewish king had ever before stained his conscience by any acts of lechery. But when the fair wife of Uriah comes athwart his vision in unexpected exposure, up leaps the latent passion and subdues him. It starts on him like a tiger from the jungles! He is left wounded and disgraced, and turns murderer only that he may cease to be an adulterer! He was left to be “tried” and the sudden test brought up so much filth from the bottom of his heart that he was forced to cry out in the agonies of remorse, “Create in me a clean heart, O God! renew a right spirit within me!”

A young man leaves his country home for the maelstrom of a great city and brings with him little else but a character hitherto honest. He thinks himself honest; his homespun father thought so too. He gets—unhappily—into an establishment where frauds are frequently practiced—but “all in the way of business.” His rustic notions are laughed at. His shopmates pity his verdant simplicity. It goes hard with him when he finishes off and polishes up the first cunning lie. It rouges his cheek a little. But he soon gets used to it. He grows sharp by practice. He fleeces customers for his employer’s sake and at length fleeces his employer for his own sake. His master’s dollars begin to find their way

into the box office of the theaters or the “banks” of the faro-players. When he goes into business for himself, the swindle is tried on a larger scale and he ends his career as the hero of a stupendous “explosion” which blows its fragments right and left through the counting rooms of a score of victimized creditors! How do you explain all this? The solution is easy. That youth brought with him into the city the seeds of knavery in his heart. Circumstances brought them out. That’s all.

In order to verify this principle to your own satisfaction, my hearer, just examine your own moral experience. Were you never startled by the discovery of many a latent passion or lust? You hoped—perhaps believed—it was not there. But the proper test to bring it out had never been applied. God had not “left you to try you” in that particular. Many a defaulting bank officer has stood at the counter and handled money for years without allowing a single dime to stick to his fingers. As he read of other men who had turned defaulters he said, “would I be such a fool as to do such a thing?” Ah! the temptation had never touched him just where it touched those other men. But as soon as Satan could offer to him the bribe he wanted and in the emergency that made his conscience

weak, he capitulated to the Devil, and “went to his own place” like Judas Iscariot.

“Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.” The only reason why some men stand at all—or stand up so long—is that they were never put upon slippery places. If they had been, the places of respectability that now “know them” would long since have “known them no more.”

Even the best and strongest here may be carrying about in their hearts the latent spark that (should a sudden draught blow in upon it) might kindle into a devouring flame! What need of close heart-searching!

What need of sustaining grace! What need of God’s eternal arm! What need of an atoning Saviour! But for that all-kind, all-supporting arm of Jesus, what man of business here but might have been in a felon’s cell! What woman but might have been the companion of those whose feet “take hold on hell?” What Christian here but might have been a blaspheming outcast or a ribald scoffer!

II. But again: there is a bright side of this subject. Bright as hope and Heaven! If temptation brings out unknown and unsuspected defects and vices—if, as in David’s case, it brings out wantonness—if, as in Peter’s case, it develops presumption—if, as in Hezekiah’s

case, it exhibits pride and ingratitude, yet on the other hand temptation often develops virtues and graces of the rarest hue! A man is left to be tried and he finds in his heart a stout healthy principle that is proof against bribes or snares, or threats or blandishments! The tempted soul comes off more than conqueror. He bears up like a cedar against the hurricane. A latent grace is developed—a firm substratum of sterling godliness is found underlying his moral and spiritual man that holds him like the rock-ribbed hills! When tempted, he stands.

As the quaint old version hath it :

“ Sticking to God in stable trust,  
As Zion’s mount he stands full just,  
Which moveth no whit, nor yet can reel,  
But standeth forever as stiff as steel.”

He stands as Nathan Hale stood, or the patriot Reed under the seductions of foreign gold ; he stands as John Huss stood before the Council—as Joseph stood against the wanton wiles of the shameless wife of Potiphar—as Daniel stood against the king of Babylon, or Paul before the throne of Nero, the imperial tiger! The Lord “left all these men to try them” and in their several hearts were found patriotism, constancy, fortitude, chastity and the overcoming loyalty to Christ.

There is this difference, however, in the two

classes of cases under review. When men fall it is through their own weakness.

When they stand firm it is God's imparted strength. "Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth and having on the breastplate of righteousness. Above all take the shield of faith wherewith ye shall be able to quench the fiery darts of the Evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God, praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit."

III. My last thought is that the best regimen for us, after all, is the regimen of trial. When God means to grow an oak the acorn is not cast into a hothouse. It is flung into the outdoor earth, and struggles bravely upward through the mountain sod. It strikes its roots far below the surface and takes mighty hold, as with subterranean cables. The winter comes down oft and again upon it. The tempest wrestles with its brawny boughs. And through the regimen of storm and gale it earns its imperial place—the monarch of the forest. God leaves the old tree to "try" it, and it comes out an oak !

So when God would have an oak-like Christian, He exposes that Christian to a discipline of toil or of trial—or of both combined. He gives him a work to do—a work for the ignorant—to instruct them—a work for the

inebriate in warring against the drinking usages and the hideous traffic in the drink that maddens the brain and kills the soul—a work for the oppressed to break their chains—a work of Christ-like love to the vagrant city child—a work of some kind in sowing truth and in saving men. Oh! how the man is straightened until the work is accomplished! The Devil looks on and waits to see the sinews crack and the courage break like the potter's vessels. But the inward grace is more than sufficient and the tried philanthropist finds “in his heart” a faith that does not fail—a love that casts out all fear—a fidelity that endureth forever. Luther tried is an overmatch for the scarlet monster on the seven hills—the tried Wilberforce is an overmatch for the “Giant Grim” of oppression, and Wesley for the host of formalism in his native land. God leaves many a poor missionary in his frontier cabin—with nothing but the promises to live on—and in his heart he finds a Saviour in possession and Heaven in expectation.

Nor is it only by toil that God tests a Christian. He employs affliction too. Property sometimes takes wing, and leaves God's child with nothing but an empty purse and a full Bible. Sickness smites him perhaps, and lays him on a weary bed of wasting, wearing pain. Death breaks into the household. A little cradle, over which the mother hovered,

slowly turns into a coffin and the little treasure that nestled so warmly in her arms lies cold enough below the grassy turf ! A husband is taken mayhap—the “silver cord” of wedded love is sundered at the “cistern” and the world grows dark in an instant !

But out from these terrible trials comes the triumphant child of God—wet with the baptism of suffering and radiant as “Mercy” rising from the river of death to the pearly gates, and as she cometh out she exclaims with adoring gratitude, “Oh ! my God ! Thou hast tried me—but when thou didst try me, I came forth as gold !” For

“ The deepest trials that we know  
A higher grace discloses ;  
Men saw the thorns on Jesus’ brow,  
But angels saw the roses ! ”



**XVI.**

**THE DOVE THAT FOUND REST.**



## XVI.

### THE DOVE THAT FOUND REST.

“ Then he put forth his hand, and took her, and pulled her in unto him into the ark.”—GENESIS viii, 9.

WE can picture to ourselves this scene. For forty days the keel of the ark has rested on the summit of Mount Ararat ; but on every side stretches a melancholy waste of waters. Not an inch of dry ground is visible, or has been for over twenty weeks. Noah wearies of his imprisonment, and, like a long voyager, is hungry for a sight of land. He can see none from his single port-hole ; but perhaps the birds in his floating menagerie can find some. So he sends forth a raven which flies back and forth—feeding perhaps on the floating offal, and lighting occasionally on the ark. The raven takes care of itself, but brings him no information.

Then he lets fly a dove to see if the waters were abated from off the face of the ground. But the dove finds no rest for the sole of her foot ; nor was there within its reach such graniferous food as it could eat. Weary with its flight and finding no tree to alight on, the

poor bird comes back to her old home. Noah watches the tired little creature as she flutters back to the window of the ark. He puts forth his hand and catches the weary bird and draws her in unto him, and gives her welcome.

As we watch the pretty creature eating its seed, and then curling its head under its glossy plumage and dropping to sleep, we are set upon a meditation about that bird. It represents a wandering soul. Whose soul? *Yours*, my brother sinner? it is probably a picture of your past experience. Like that wandering bird, you have flown far, and looked in many directions, but you have not found *rest*. You have tried one place after another, one pursuit after another, one pleasure after another, but none of them gave you solid peace. None of them satisfied the hunger of your immortal soul. None of them made you feel *safe* for this world or for the next. Perhaps you tried money and all it could buy; but it could not purchase peace for your disquieted spirit. Perhaps you flew up on some perch of ambition; and then found yourself as sadly off as that rich and distinguished English statesman to whom a friend wished a "Happy New Year!" and the melancholy reply was, "It had need to be a happier one than the last year, for I did not see a single happy day in it!" Whatever you may have tried, it furnished your soul no substantial rest. The very

idea of rest implies something solid and substantial underneath you. No mind can be at rest while tortured by an uneasy conscience, or by the dread of losing its most cherished treasures. What could you know of peaceful repose when one of your own household was lying at the point of death in the next room—or when the cry of “fire!” was ringing in the street beneath your window? The human soul, like the body, must have a sense of security before it can realize a perfect rest. Does this world afford you that? Can your soul be insured by it against disquietude, disappointment, disaster and the havoc of death? Does that weary bird, your heart, ever find any rest for the sole of the foot?

Answer this question honestly, all ye who have tried hard to draw a gill of happiness out of a whole cask of sensual pleasures. Answer this, ye who have built up lofty expectation of wealth, or professional success, or social eminence, or any other of this world’s attractive and inviting perches. When did a man ever get himself snugly fixed and determine to nestle down amid his creature-comforts, that God has not routed him up again? This world is not a Christian’s rest; no, nor an impenitent sinner’s either. God has vetoed that. You may rear, for example, your tasteful residence, and decorate it with the most elegant products of art; you may

gather around your fireside a cheerful household, who shall sing a melodious "Sweet home" to your affections; but just as surely as you let the dove of your *heart* bear its whole weight on this frail bush, the bush will break, sooner or later, and break when you least expect it! Perhaps the flames will destroy your dwelling, or bankruptcy bring it "to the hammer," or the angel of death, on its mysterious mission, may alight on the couch or the crib that contains your treasures. Mayhap domestic strifes or disappointments may embitter your cup, and you discover that no wall can be built so high or so strong as to wall out trouble and sorrow.

Well—if the mind cannot find abiding happiness in any of the perishable things of earth, neither can your immortal spirit find rest in any mere human reliance—whether human opinion, human prayer or human promises. Have you ever obtained an assurance of salvation on the ground either of your best purposes or best performances? Are you willing to risk the everlasting future of your soul on either what any man has done for you, or you have ever done for yourself! Pushing the probe in deeper let me ask you in all kindness—will your present style of thinking and living satisfy conscience and satisfy God, and will it secure to you spiritual health, and a peaceful death and an immortality of glory?

Ah, I see you shake your head, and a shadow passes over your countenance. Then you are not at rest! You do not feel safe. You cannot bear your whole weight on any brittle spider's web. No! And God does not mean that your uneasy and sin-troubled soul shall find rest anywhere outside of that Ark which redeeming love has provided. Millions upon millions have flown from one direction to another, like Noah's dove, and found that this wide world from pole to pole "had not for them a home." They have been forced to the same confession as Lord Tennyson's gifted young friend, Arthur Hallam, when he exclaimed, "Lord, I have viewed this world all over. I have tried how this thing or that will fit my spirit. I can find *nothing to rest on*; for nothing here hath any rest itself. Oh, Blessed Jesus—center of light and strength!—the fullness of all things—I come back and join myself to Thee, and to THEE alone!"

"He heard the voice of Jesus say,  
Come unto me and rest,  
Lay down, thou weary one, lay down  
Thy head upon my breast!"

II. When Noah's dove could find no rest for the sole of her foot, whither did she fly? We read that she "returned unto him to the ark." She saw nothing to alight upon anywhere else, and so she spread her weary wing

toward the huge vessel on the peak of Ararat. To-day I sound in your ear the invitation of the Divine love and the Divine authority—"return unto ME!" To do this you must abandon all trust in self-righteousness and all hope of self-salvation. To do this you must confess that you are a guilty wanderer—that God is right and you are wrong. You must renounce your past sins, however dear to you, and break with your old habits and your old self. The voice to you is *return!* There must be no delay. The weary bird could bring nothing but itself; and you can bring nothing to Jesus Christ but a weak and wandering sinner. Don't bring your sins; don't bring your excuses or apologies; don't bring your merits, for they are not worth the transportation. Bring to the compassionate Saviour yourself, just as you are, and just what sin has made you. The Prodigal's rags and wretchedness were his only letter of recommendation.

Whither did the dove return? To the only refuge amid the whole wide waste of waters. There was but one. Beneath it lay a drowned world; around it spread the devouring deep! God has provided but one ark for your soul. "There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." In this wide world there are many systems of religion; but God has provided only one—just as He has created but a single sun to "rule the

day." At that single gateway of Salvation the prince must enter alongside of the peasant ; the philosopher must walk in by the side of the little child. We seem to see that tired, homesick bird sailing along through the air toward the solitary ark, and when it gets there it finds only *one window*. There was a first, a second, and a third story in Noah's huge leviathan of a ship, but all the light was admitted through that single opening. Beautifully does that single window typify the illumination of the Holy Spirit. And most strikingly does it set forth that every soul that comes to Jesus Christ must come into a saving union with Him through the Holy Spirit's regenerating work. This vital truth Our Lord announced to Nicodemus in that wonderful conversation which contains the most comprehensive body of theology found on any page of the Bible.

There was only one window to the ark and that was open. We cannot imagine that the weary bird did so foolish a thing as to drive its head against the walls of the ark, or to alight on the roof, or to fly around the vessel. It wanted to come in, and there was only one place of entrance. My troubled friend, seeking to be saved—can you not learn from that bird just what you must do ? A certain awakened soul was once taught by a bird how to find admission into the "peace that passeth under-

standing through Christ Jesus.” The late Dr. Nicolas Murray tells us that he was preaching, on a bright spring day, in the ancient church of Elizabeth. During the service a bird flew in through the open door, and sailed up to the vaulted ceiling. There sat in the audience an intelligent lady who had been for weeks under deep conviction of sin and had found no rest for her troubled soul. She began to watch the troubled bird as it flew to one closed window after another, and she kept saying to herself “Why don’t it see the open door?” The poor thing flew around and around till it grew weary, and then lowering itself toward the floor, it caught a view of the open door, and it was out in an instant, into the sunshine. When it was gone, the troubled woman said to herself, “I have been acting just like that bird. I have been trying to find peace where it could not be found. I have tried to find escape from the bondage and burden of sin through windows that were closed against me. *Christ is the door.* As that bird escaped into the light and the sunshine, just so may I.” And she actually found peace that day by a simple yielding of her weary and sin-plagued heart to her Saviour.

I fear that many in this assembly have found no rest for their souls, because they have been seeking it in the wrong place and by wrong methods ; they have flown everywhere but to

the right spot. One has tried to reform his life, but was not able to regenerate his heart ; and the old diseases broke out again. Another has said, " If I read God's word and pray enough, I shall find peace." Another has betaken himself to some special service of an Evangelist, or has gone to converse with his pastor, or in a kind of forlorn desperation has entered an " inquiry meeting " to find relief. None of these is God's ark ! Nothing but life can produce life. Jesus declares " I am the Way; I am the LIFE ! " He that hath the Son, and he only, hath life ; and the Divine Spirit leads only to the Almighty and the Crucified Christ. In short, oh, anxious and troubled soul, who art in danger of being misled by the devil, or of being lost by delay—there is but one window into the ark, and that stands wide open ! Coming to that is faith. For faith, you must remember, is not a sentiment, not an opinion ; it is an *act*. It is the act of joining your weakness to Christ's strength, your unworthiness to His infinite merit, yourself to Himself. The obedience of your soul to the leading of the Holy Spirit brings you to Jesus Christ, and the infinite love puts forth the pierced hand and *draws you in*—as Noah drew that returning dove into the ark. Then comes peace, wondrous peace, such as this world can neither give nor take away. All the disquietude of this world cannot shake it. There

is no condemnation to them which are *in Christ Jesus*. The soul fears no evil tidings ; for the perfect love has cast out fear. Conscience no longer torments ; and death no longer alarms, for Jesus has conquered death. Wondrous peace ineffable ! There is only ONE in all the universe who can bestow it, and when He does bestow it, all the powers of Hell cannot give it a single jar ! It is the peace of God, and the peace with God which passeth all understanding.

“Can I do anything for you ?” said an officer on the battlefield, who came across a wounded Union soldier who lay weltering in his blood. “Nothing, thank you !” “Shall I bring you a little water ?” “No, I thank you ; I *am dying*.” “Is there not something I can do ; shall I not send some message to your friends ?” “I will not trouble you to do that ; but there is one thing for which I would be much obliged. In my knapsack you will find a Testament. Please open it to the fourteenth Chapter of John, and you will find a verse that begins with the word ‘peace.’ Please read it to me.” The officer got out the book, and read, “Peace I leave with you ; my peace I give unto you ; not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” “Thank you, sir,” said the dying man. “I have got that peace ; I am going to that Saviour ; I don’t want any-

thing more." His fluttering spirit, like a home-bound dove, flew heavenward, and the blessed Jesus put forth His hand and sweetly drew him in! Although but an humble private in the army of the Lord as he was in the army of the land, yet he found his place among the crowned conquerors in glory.

" Ten thousand times ten thousand,  
In sparkling raiment bright,  
The armies of the ransomed saints  
Throng up the steeps of light ;  
'Tis finished—all is finished,  
Their fight with death and sin,  
Fling open wide the golden gates  
*And let the victors in!*"



**XVII.**  
**PAST FEELING.**



## XVII.

### PAST FEELING.

"Past feeling."—EPH. iv, 19.

A LITTLE boy is playing by his mother's side. Naturally he is not unfeeling. He is not insensible to generous sentiments. When he sees an object of distress, he is touched by it. He may, perhaps, give up his spending money to relieve a beggar; or weep in sorrow for an unguarded blow given to a schoolmate. His heart has some flesh in it. The little fellow has *tears* in his composition; he knows what it is to feel.

Years roll on. His situation changes; and he changes with it. Watchful parents die, or else he is removed far from them. He falls under evil influences. Wicked companions gather about him—restraint slowly decays like a rotting rope—he breaks loose into sin. The calamity befalls him which befell the traveler from Jerusalem to Jericho. He

**NOTE.**—My only reason for consenting to the publication of this discourse, is found in the simple fact that God was pleased to bless its plain unadorned truths, to the conversion of several souls during a revival.

“falls among thieves” who do worse than rob him of his purse; they rob him of decency, of self-respect, of all reverence for the pure, the honest, the sacred, the holy. He grows reckless, and launches his depravity out on the open sea, literally spreading sail for perdition. All regard for man, all fear of God wears away from his heart. His soul begins to petrify. At length he is ripe for anything.

In an evil hour he plans a mutiny on board the ship, and with his own hand strikes down the officer of the deck, and heaves his crimson corpse out into the sea, as coolly as he would throw over a dog! Years pass by, dark desperate years of rapine and of blood. At length his pirate cruiser is captured, and he is brought on shore in irons. His soul is in irons too. They try him, they condemn him, they sentence him. But through it all he is perfectly unmoved. They drag him to his cell. He spends the last night before his execution in that living tomb—and *sleeps!* He ascends the fatal scaffold, as callous as a rock. No words of tender exhortation and entreaty from the chaplain by his side can melt him for a moment. That adamantine heart—that heart once tender, once alive to generous feeling, once soft enough for tears of contrition—that heart is now *past feeling!* It once could feel; nay, it did feel. It feels no longer. He dies as he lived; and among the nettles on his

shunned and solitary grave, we would plant a stone—not of respect, but of warning—and write on it God's solemn sentence, "PAST FEELING.",

Now such appalling cases as this I have described are not imaginary. They are extreme cases, I admit. They are about as bad as earth can furnish, or fiends can delight to look upon. We have ourselves seen cases very much like them. The gambler, who sits glued to his roulette table till the morning sun looks in to reproach him; the burglar, who after years of prison experience still plots his deeds of darkness; the poor outcast child of shame, who vents her vileness on the evening air, as she passes us in the streets; the ruffian, who makes merchandise of human sinews and human souls; all these are but melancholy spectacles for men to shudder at, and for pitying angels to weep over. They are the terrific examples of what human depravity can work out when man is simply given up *to himself*. They illustrate fully the callousness of the heart when it has become *past feeling*; feeling for friends, feeling for reputation, feeling for God's word, feeling for life itself or for a dread hereafter.

It was to such persons, to those whom with a sad significance we style "abandoned" persons, that the apostle referred in the passage before us. He had just been exhorting the

Ephesian church to purity of heart and life. As a warning, he points to the profligacy of heathenism about them. He makes a beacon of the godless Gentiles who "walked in the vanity of their mind," whose "understandings were darkened," who were alienated from the life of God. Those men had debauched their own moral sense. They had given themselves over to the tyranny of lust to "work all uncleanness with greediness." Until at length they had become so insensible to their guilt, that Paul brands them with the fatal epithet, "*past feeling.*"

Now I do earnestly hope that this sense of my text is not, and never will be, applicable to anyone in this assembly. I trust that on no brow here will ever be affixed a brand to which the guilty wearer shall be indifferent, a brand seen and read of all men, except the man himself. If God shall lengthen out my life among you, may I never behold the harrowing spectacle of any young man in this audience so dead to all regard for himself, regard for society, regard for the God of Heaven, that he shall not even feel a glow of shame upon his cheek, when he meets the mother who bore him, or the pastor who tried to save him. Never, never come that day when any of you, my beloved young friends, shall have become so dead to the claims of God and the voice of conscience, that having grown "*past feeling.*"

we must be constrained to abandon you as past all hope !

There is, however, a sense in which the solemn words of my text may apply to some of you. I fear it will yet apply. Perhaps it does already. I refer to that insensibility to religious truth which marks those who have often grieved the Holy Spirit. This is a most tremendous calamity. It is all the worse from the fact that its victim is insensible to his own insensibility. He does not feel how fearful it is not to feel. There are many here whom I could startle at once by telling them, on good medical authority, that a deadly disease was beginning its stealthy work upon their frames ; or if I should tell them that a burglar had designs upon their house and life to-night ; or that a treacherous friend would betray the secret to-morrow which shall blast their character. But when I come and tell you plainly that you are in danger of being lost forever, you scarcely open your ears to listen. What care you for it ? "What's that to me ? "

My impenitent friend ! it has not been always so with thee. Open the leaves of your heart's diary. Bring up memory to the witness box. She will remind you of a time when your conscience was tender, and sensitive to gospel influence. As the words of warning sounded from a pastor's lips, on some past Sabbath, you listened to them, and listened

with solemn awe. The truth fell like the small rain on the tender herb. You were subdued. You were struck through with conviction of the exceeding sinfulness of sin. It was your own sin that haunted you. The specter would not

“Down at your bidding !”

You were sore troubled. You wept. With red eyes, and the tear still undried upon your cheek, you left the sanctuary. The triflers, as they came out of church to laugh, to gossip, or to criticise, astonished you and grieved you. Feeling so much yourself, you wondered how they could be so apparently “past feeling.” Perhaps you prayed, and for a time went “softly.” Your long closed Bible was opened. Some faithful friend was sought for religious counsel. And all that time the infinite Spirit of God was striving with you. Have you ever thought of the magnitude and the wonderful mercy of that phrase, “striving”? Just think of it. God striving with a sinner! It bespeaks strait and struggle. It bespeaks the anxiety of God himself to save His own wicked child. It is as if the ineffable Redeemer went down upon His knees before the willful, disobedient one, and besought him not to commit the eternal suicide!

So the Divine Spirit strove with you. And

under those strong pressures of truth, and uprisings of conscience and wooings of the Holy Ghost you were "almost persuaded" to become a Christian. But alas ! how is it with you now ? Do you feel to-night as you felt then ? Does the word sin smite you as then ? Does the word *duty* arouse you as then ? Does the mention of that blessed word "SAVIOUR" stir the font of tears within you, as it used to do in those days gone by ? Can you weep now as you wept then ? Can you pray as you prayed then ? Or, on the other hand, do you not regard the very appeal I am making now to you, as a merely professional thing that I am employed to make twice every week, and in which you have no personal concern ? Have you deliberately made up your mind, that in spite of warnings and entreaties, that through sick chambers and dying beds, and yawning graves, that over the very cross of Jesus, planted in your guilty path, you will press your way onward to the gates of hell ?

Then I do not say that you are "*past* feeling." I dare not say that. God only knows your future. But most frankly and solemnly, I declare to you, that there *have been* cases in which men have so steeled themselves against conviction, that they were left, like "Lot's wife," monuments of wrath ! I do not know that this is your case ; but I fear it. I cannot bear to write this awful epitaph over your soul,

dead in its trespasses and sin—" *Past Feeling.*" Is that a dreadful moment to you, in which you are compelled to enter the chamber of a sick friend, and break to him the fatal truth, that his physician has given him up as past recovery? You would give your right hand to avoid that duty, but fidelity requires it. And I should be an unfaithful watchman for souls, if I did not proclaim to-night my fears that there are some now here who have grieved away God's Spirit forever.

Occasionally a person is found who will frankly confess his total insensibility to all that is most precious to a saint, to all that is most startling to a sinner. A faithful pastor in a neighboring State relates an instance so important, as a proof of our position, that I shall introduce it, in spite of certain antiquated prejudices against personal narratives in the pulpit. My Bible is full of personal history; and I am never afraid to introduce an anecdote, or relate an incident which makes a page in the great book of God's providence.

"I once entered a farm house," said this pastor, "on a chilly November evening, and spent an hour in personal religious conversation with its inmates. The aged father of the family—a most kind and amiable man—followed me to the door, and stopped me on the porch. He took me by the hand, and most deliberately said: 'I thank you for this visit,

and hope it will not be the last. As you have just commenced your labors among us, I wish to give you a word of advice, based on my own experience. *Let us old people alone*, and devote your labors to the youth of your flock. Forty years ago, I was greatly anxious about my soul ; many were then converted, but I was not one of them. During the ministry of Mr. M——, many more were converted, but I was not one of them. And now, for years, I have not *had a single feeling* on the subject ! I know that I am a lost sinner ; I know that I can only be saved through Jesus Christ ; I feel persuaded that when I die, *I am lost !* I believe all you preach, but I feel it no more than if I were a block of marble. I expect to live and die just as I am. So leave us to ourselves, and our sins, and give your strength to the work of saving the young.'

"I remembered that incident, and watched the progress of that man. His seat was rarely vacant in the sanctuary ; but he was a true prophet of his own fate. He lived as he predicted ; and so he died. We laid him down at last in his hopeless grave, in the midst of a congregation over whom God had so often opened windows in heaven." He was joined to his idols ; God let him alone !

I would fain leave you, my hearers, to withdraw with the tremulous tones of that old man's voice still ringing in your ears. I

would prefer that you should go home to ponder the honest confession and the fate of one who was "past feeling" anything but his own indifference. Yet I cannot dismiss you without a few words of affectionate counsel to those who are not past feeling—who feel now—who cannot but feel under the touch of God's Spirit. Yonder anxious faces are the dial-plates of anxious hearts. In this silent, hushed assembly, we seem to overhear the very throb of those hearts, palpitating with the great question, "What shall I do to be saved?"

My friends! bear away with you from this house four practical suggestions drawn from the text before us.

I. You feel now; but *do not be content with mere feeling*. Tears never saved a sinner; hell is vocal with the wails of the weepers. *Faith is better than feeling*. Your Bible does not say feel and be saved. It says, "Believe and be saved." And faith is not enough without action. "The devils believe." There are no atheists in the abodes of the lost. But lost spirits do not love God, do not *obey* Him. You must obey as well as believe. Act out your feelings. Obey God in self-denying duty. Crystallize your feeling into faith, and prove your faith by your works. "Faith without works is dead." Faith in Jesus is the invisible *root* of religion concealed within

the soul ; but deeds of duty are the glorious outgrowth, with stalwart trunk, and branches broad, and luxuriant masses of foliage lifted into the airs of heaven. And amid these goodly boughs are found the *fruits* of godliness shining—as quaint Andrew Marvell said of the Bermuda oranges :

“Like golden lamps in a deep green night.”

Aim immediately at fruits. Begin to-night to serve God from principle. Go home and set up your altar. Lay hold of work ; the harder it is the better. Paul struck the keynote of his whole religious life when, in the gush of his first feeling, he cried out, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do ?”

II. My second suggestion is, that what you do, you must *do quickly*, for you cannot long remain as you are. For a few brief days in May the orchards are white with blossoms. They soon turn to fruit, or else float away useless and wasted upon the idle breeze. It will be so with your present feelings. They must be deepened into decision, or be entirely dissipated by delay. You must advance, or be lost. As a result of your present seriousness, you will either become a true child of God, or else a more hardened and unfeeling child of wrath. Dread, as you would dread death itself, the very idea of relapsing into indifference. Cherish conviction. Take your

fears to the mercy seat, and beseech your compassionate Saviour not to permit your awakened soul ever to become "past feeling."

III. My third suggestion is a brief caution. Do not compare your own feelings with those of other people, or allow yourself to be discouraged because you have not the intense griefs or the lively joys of which they speak. God does not command you to feel like this one or like that. He bids you *repent and believe*; you are to conform to His word and not to your neighbors' varying frames and feelings.

The Holy Spirit deals with no two hearts precisely alike. He opens some hearts by the gentlest touch of love; others He seems to wrench open as with the iron bar of alarming judgments. Spurgeon happily remarks: "When the lofty palm tree of Zeilan puts forth its flower, the sheath bursts with a report that shakes the forest; but thousands of other flowers of equal value open in the morning, and the very dewdrops hear no sound; even so many souls do blossom in mercy, and the world hears neither whirlwinds nor tempest." Do not question the rightfulness of your own heart exercises because no one else has had any precisely similar. God is a Sovereign. He will save you just as He chooses.

Be thankful that you can be saved at all. See to it that you do not cavil and question and tamper until the Holy Spirit abandon you to become past feeling.

IV. Finally, let me remind you that in the eternal world no one can be indifferent, no one shall be insensible. Neither in heaven nor in hell can you ever become "past feeling."

The home of the ransomed is a home of rapture. Heaven is alive with emotion. Every heart throbs, every eye kindles, every tongue is praising, every finger strikes a harp-string. Listen with the ear of faith, and you can hear the distant oratorios of the blessed as they swell up in melodies seraphic and celestial! Look yonder with faith's clear eye, and you will see the mighty multitudes before the throne. You will behold the flashing shower of golden crowns flung before the feet of one majestic Being. You will catch one outburst of melody. The burden of the strain will be "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us in His blood, be the praise and the dominion forever!" No mortal's name shall be heard of then. Paul shall be lost sight of in the glory of Paul's Redeemer. Luther will be unseen amid the worship of Luther's Reformer. John Calvin shall sing *None but Christ!* And John Wesley shall shout back *None but Christ!* With one heart and one voice they all roll

high the magnificent acclaim : "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive honor, and power, and glory, and blessing, for ever and ever!"

The world of darkness will be a world of feeling too. "There shall be weeping" there. Not tears of penitence, but tears of despair. The debauchee will be gnawed by his appetite for sensualities that never can be gratified. The poor drunkard will be possessed with a passion for the poison bowl, but will find not a single drop to slake the undying thirst. The covetous spirit will writhe in its own selfishness ; and the skeptic will be tormented with the constant sight of a Jehovah whom he once denied, and of a heaven which he closed against himself. "*Ye knew your duty and ye did it not,*" will blaze on every wall of that dark prison house !

Conscience will be fearfully busy then—busy in pointing to the visions of a Saviour offered and a Saviour despised—busy in recalling mercies once contemned, and precious invitations trampled under foot. Dying friend ! You may smother conscience here. You may drown serious thought. You may gag your moral sense. But that smothered conscience will rise again. It will arise in the dying hour, startled from slumber by the crash of dissolving humanity. It will awake to new life on that dread morn when the Arch-

angel's trump shall sound. It will be alive with an intensity of torment on that day when the "books are opened"; and it will live amid the anguish of perdition *never again to become PAST FEELING!*



**XVIII.**

**THE JOYS OF THE CHRISTIAN  
MINISTRY.**



## XVIII.

### THE JOYS OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

I INVITE your attention this morning to the nineteenth and twentieth verses of the second chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Thessalonians :

"For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing ? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming ? For ye are our glory and joy."

These words were written by the most remarkable man in the annals of the Christian Church. Great interest is attached to them from the fact that they are part of the first inspired epistle that Paul ever wrote. Nay, more. The letter to the Church of Thessalonica is probably the earliest as to date of all the books of the New Testament. Paul was then at Corinth, about fifty-two years old, in the full vigor of his splendid prime. His spiritual son, Timothy, brings him tidings from the infant Church in Thessalonica that

NOTE.—A Valedictory Discourse delivered to the Lafayette Avenue Church, April 6, 1890.

awakens his solicitude. He yearns to go and see them, but he cannot ; so he determines to write to them ; and one day he lays aside his tent needle, seizes his pen, and, when that pen touches the papyrus sheet the New Testament begins. The apostle's great, warm heart kindles and blazes as he goes on, and at length bursts out in this impassioned utterance : “ Ye are my glory and joy ! ”

Paul, I thank thee for a thousand things, but for nothing do I thank thee more than for that golden sentence. In these thrilling words, the greatest of Christian pastors, rising above the poverty, homelessness, and scorn that surrounded him, reaches forth his hand and grasps his royal diadem. No man shall rob the aged hero of his crown. No chaplet worn by a Roman conqueror, in the hour of his brightest triumph, rivals the coronal that Pastor Paul sees flashing before his eyes. It is a crown blazing with stars ; every star an immortal soul plucked from the darkness of sin into the light and liberty of a child of God. Poor, is he ? He is making many rich. Despised, is he ? He wouldn't change places with Cæsar. Homeless, is he ? His citizenship is in heaven, where he will find myriads whom he can meet and say to them : “ Ye, ye are my glory and joy.” Sixteen centuries after Paul uttered these words, John Bunyan re-echoed them when he said :

"I have counted as if I had goodly buildings in the places where my spiritual children were born. My heart has been so wrapt up in this excellent work that I accounted myself more honored of God than if He had made me emperor of all the world, or the lord of all the glory of the earth, without it. He that converteth a sinner from the error of his ways doth save a soul from death ; and they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament."

Now, the great apostle expressed what every ambassador of Christ constantly experiences when in the thick of the Master's work. His are the joys of acquisition. His purse may be scanty, his teaching may be humble, and the field of his labor may be so obscure that no bulletins of his achievements are ever proclaimed to an admiring world. Difficulties may sadden and discouragement bring him to his knees ; but I tell you that obscure, toiling man of God has a joy vouchsafed to him that a Frederick or a Marlborough never knew on the field of bloody triumph, or that a Rothschild never dreams of in his mansions of splendor, nor an Astor with his stores of gold. Every nugget of fresh truth discovered makes him happier than one who has found a golden spoil. Every attentive auditor is a delight ; every look of interest on a human countenance flashes back to illuminate his own. Above all, when the tears of penitence course down a cheek and a returning soul is led by him to the Saviour, there is great joy in heaven over a

repentant wanderer, and a joy in that minister's heart too exquisite to utter. Then he is repaid in full measure, pressed down, running over into his bosom.

Converted souls are jewels in the caskets of faithful parents, teachers, and pastors. They shall flash in the diadem which the Righteous Judge shall give them in that great day. Ah ! it is when an ambassador of Christ sees an army of young converts and listens to the first utterances of their newborn love, and when he presides at a communion table and sees his spiritual offspring gathered around him, more true joy that faithful pastor feels than "Cæsar with a Senate at his heels." Rutherford, of Scotland, only voiced the yearnings of every true pastor's heart when he exclaimed : "Oh, how rich were I if I could obtain of my Lord the salvation of you all ! What a prey had I gotten to have you all caught in Christ's net. My witness is above, that your heaven would be the two heavens to me, and the salvation of you all would be two salutations to me."

Yet, my beloved people, when I recall the joy of my forty-four years of public ministry I often shudder at the fact of how near I came to losing it. For very many months my mind was balancing between the pulpit and the attractions of a legal and political career. A single hour in a village prayer meeting turned the scale. But perhaps behind it all a beloved mother's prayers were moving the mys-

terious hand that touched the poised balance, and made souls outweigh silver, and eternity outweigh time.

Would that I could lift up my voice this morning in every academy, college, and university on this broad continent. I would say to every gifted Christian youth, "God and humanity have need of you." He who redeemed you by His precious blood has a sovereign right to the best brains and the most persuasive tongues and the highest culture. Why crowd into the already over-crowded professions? The only occupation in America that is not overdone is the occupation of serving Jesus Christ and saving souls. I do not affirm that a Christian cannot serve his Master in any other sphere or calling than the gospel ministry; but I do affirm that the ambition for worldly gains and worldly honors is sluicing the very heart of God's Church, and drawing out to-day much of the Church's best blood in its greedy outlets. And I fearlessly declare that when the most splendid talent has reached the loftiest round on the ladder of promotion, that round is many rungs lower than a pulpit in which a consecrated tongue proclaims a living Christianity to a dying world. What Lord Eldon from the bar, what Webster from the Senate chamber, what Sir Walter Scott from the realms of romance, what Darwin from the field of science, what monarch from Wall

Street or Lombard Street can carry his laurels or his gold up to the judgment seat and say, "These are my joy and crown?" The laurels and the gold will be dust—ashes. But if so humble a servant of Jesus Christ as your pastor can ever point to the gathered flock arrayed in white before the celestial throne, then he may say, "What is my hope or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of Christ at His coming?"

Good friends, I have told you what aspirations led me to the pulpit as a place in which to serve my Master; and I thank Christ, the Lord, for putting me into the ministry. The forty-four years I have spent in that office have been unspeakably happy. Many a far better man has not been as happy, from causes beyond control. He may have had to contend with feeble health as I never have; or a despondent temperament, as I never have; or have struggled to maintain a large household on a slender purse; he may have been placed in a stubborn field, where the gospel was shattered to pieces on flinty hearts. From all such trials a kind Providence has delivered your pastor.

My ministry began in a very small church. For that I am thankful. Let no young minister covet a large parish at the outset. The clock that is not content to strike one will never strike twelve. In that little parish at

Burlington, N. J., I had opportunity for the two most valuable studies for any minister—God's Book and individual hearts. My next call was to organize and serve an infant church in Trenton, N. J., and for that I am thankful. Laying the foundation of a new church affords capital tuition in spiritual masonry, and the walls of that church have stood firm and solid for forty years. The crowning mercy of my Trenton ministry was this, that one Sunday, while I was watering the flock, a goodlier vision than that of Rebecca appeared at the well's mouth, and the sweet sunshine of that presence has never departed from the pathway of my life. To this hour the prosaic old capital of New Jersey has a halo of poetry floating over it, and I never go through it without waving a benediction from the passing train.

The next stage of my life's work was a seven years' pastorate of Market Street Church in the City of New York. To those seven years of hard and happy labor I look back with joy. The congregation swarmed with young men, many of whom have risen to prominence in the commercial and religious life of the great metropolis. The name of Market Street is graven indelibly on my heart. I rejoice that the quaint old edifice still stands and welcomes every Sabbath a congregation of landsmen and of sailors. During the year 1858 occurred the great revival, when a mighty wind from

Heaven filled every house where the people of God were sitting, and the glorious work of that revival kept many of us busy for six months, night and day.

Early in the year of 1860 a signal was made to me from this side of the East River. It came from a brave little band then known as the Park Presbyterian Church, who had never had any installed pastor. The signal at first was unheeded ; but a higher than human hand seemed to be behind it, and I had only to obey. That little flock stood like the man of Macedonia, saying "Come over and help us," and after I had seen the vision, immediately I decided to come, assuredly concluding that God had called me to preach 'the gospel unto them.

This morning my memory goes back to that chilly, stormy April Sunday when my labors began as your first pastor. About two hundred and fifty people, full of grace and grit, gathered on that Easter morning to see how God could roll away stones that for two years had blocked their path with discouragement. My first message many of you remember. It was, "I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." Of that little company, the large majority has departed. Many of them are among the white-robed that now behold their risen Lord in glory. Of the seventeen church offi-

cers—elders, deacons, and trustees—then in office, who greeted me that day, only four are living, and of that number only one, Mr. Albion P. Higgins, is now a member of this congregation. I wonder how many there are here this morning that gathered before my pulpit on that Easter Sunday thirty years ago? As many of you as there are present that were at that service thirty years ago will do me a favor if you will rise in your pews.

[Thirteen people here stood up.]

God bless you! If it hadn't been for you this ark would never have been built.

Ah! we had happy days in that modest chapel. The tempest of civil war was raging, with Lincoln's steady hand at the helm. We got our share of the gale; but we set our storm-sails, and everyone that could handle ropes stood at his or her place. Just think of the money contributions that small church made during the first year of my pastorate—\$20,000, not in paper, but in gold. The little band in that chapel was not only generous in donations but valiant in spirit, and it was under the gracious shower of a revival that we removed into this edifice on the 16th of March, 1862.

The subsequent history of the church was published so fully at the notable anniversary five years ago, that I need only repeat the chief headlines in a very few sentences. In

1863 Mr. William Wickes started a mission school, which afterward grew into the present Cumberland Street Church. In 1866 occurred that wonderful work of grace that resulted in the addition of 320 souls to our membership, one hundred of them heads of families. As a thank-offering to God for that rich blessing the Memorial Mission School was established, which was soon organized into the Memorial Presbyterian Church, now on Seventh Avenue, under the excellent pastorate of my Brother Nelson. During the winter of 1867 a conference of gentlemen was held in yonder study which set on foot the present Classon Avenue Church, where my Brother Chamberlain administers equally satisfactorily. Olivet Mission was organized in 1878. It will always be fragrant with the memory of Horace B. Griffing, its first superintendent. The Cuyler Chapel was opened on Atlantic Avenue in March, 1886, by our Young People's Association, who are maintaining it most vigorously. The little Corwin Mission on Myrtle Avenue was established by a member of the church to perpetuate his name, and is largely sustained by members of this church.

Of all the efficient, successful labors of the Lafayette Avenue Temperance Society, the Women's Home and Foreign Missionary Society, their Benevolent Society, the Cuyler Mission Band, the Daughters of the Temple,

and other kindred organizations, I have no time or place to speak this morning. But I must repeat now what I have said in years past, that the two strong arms of this church are its Sunday-school and its Young People's Association. The former has been kept well up to the ideal of such an institution. It is that of a training school of young hearts for this life and for the life to come. God's blessing has descended upon it like the morning dew. Of the large number of children that have been enrolled in its classes 730 have been received into membership with this church alone, and to the profession of faith in Christ—to say nothing of those who have joined elsewhere. Warmly do I thank and heartily do I congratulate our beloved brother, Daniel W. McWilliams, and his faithful group of teachers, and the superintendent of the primary department and her group of assistants, on the seal which God has set upon their loving work. They contemplate the long array of children whom they have guided to Jesus ; and they, too, can exclaim, “What is our joy or crown of rejoicing ? Are not even ye in the Lord ?”

If the Sunday-school has rendered good service, so has the well-drilled and well-watered Young People's Association. The fires of devotion have never gone out on the altar of their Monday evening gatherings. For length of days and number of membership combined,

probably it surpasses all similar young people's associations in our country. About three thousand names have been on its membership roll, and of this number twelve have set their faces toward the gospel ministry. Oh, what a source of joy to me that I leave that association in such a high condition of vigor and prosperity ! No church can languish, no church can die, while it has plenty of young blood in its veins.

What has been the outcome of these thirty years of happy pastorate ? As far as the results can be tabulated the following is a brief summary : During my pastorate here I have preached about 2750 discourses, have delivered a very large number of public addresses in behalf of Sunday-schools, Young Men's Associations, the temperance reform, and kindred enterprises for advancing human welfare. I have officiated at 682 marriages. I have baptized 962 children. The total number received into the membership of this church during this time has been 4223. Of this number 1920 have united by a confession of their faith in Jesus Christ. An army, you see, an army of nearly two thousand souls, have enlisted under the banner of King Jesus, and taken their "sacramentum," or vow of loyalty, before this pulpit. What is our crown of rejoicing ? Are not even they in the presence of Christ at His coming ?

It is due to you that I should commend your liberality in gifts to God's treasury. During these thirty years over \$640,000 have been contributed for ecclesiastical and benevolent purposes, and about \$700,000 for the maintenance of the sanctuary, its worship, and its work. Over a million and a quarter of dollars have passed through these two channels. The successive boards of trustees have managed our financial affairs carefully and efficiently. The architecture of this noble edifice is not disfigured by any mortgage; I hope it never will be.

There is one department of ministerial labor that has had a peculiar attraction to me and afforded me peculiar joy. Pastoral work has always been my passion. It has been my rule to know everybody in this congregation, if possible, and seldom have I allowed a day to pass without a visit to some of your homes. I fancied that you cared more to have a warm-hearted pastor than a cold-blooded preacher, however intellectual. To carry out thoroughly a system of personal oversight, to visit every family, to stand by the sick and dying beds, to put one's self into sympathy with aching hearts and bereaved households, is a process that has swallowed up time, and I tell you it has strained the nerves prodigiously. Costly as the process has been, it has paid. If I have given sermons to you, I have got sermons from

you. The closest tie that binds us together is that sacred tie that has been wound around the cribs in your nurseries, the couches in your sick chambers, the chairs at your fireside, and even the coffins that have borne away your precious dead. My fondest hope is that, however much you may honor and love my successor in this pulpit, you will evermore keep a warm place in the chimney-corner of your hearts for the man that gave the best thirty years of his life to your service.

Here let me bespeak for my successor the most kind and reasonable allowance as to pastoral labors. Do not expect too much from him. Very few ministers have the peculiar passion for pastoral service that I have had ; and if Christ's ambassador who shall occupy this pulpit proclaims faithfully the whole gospel of God and brings a sympathetic heart to your houses, do not criticise him unjustly because he may not attempt to make twenty-five thousand pastoral visits in thirty years. House to house visitation has only been one hemisphere of the pastor's work. I have accordingly endeavored to guard the door of yonder study so that I might give undivided energy to preparation for this pulpit.

You know, my dear people, how I have preached and what I have preached. In spite of many interruptions, I have honestly handled each topic as best I could. The minister that

foolishly runs races with himself is doomed to an early suicide. All that I claim for my sermons is that they have been true to God's Book and the cross of Jesus Christ—have been simple enough for a child to understand, and have been preached in full view of the judgment seat. I have aimed to keep this pulpit abreast of all great moral reforms and human progress, and the majestic marchings of the kingdom of King Jesus. The preparation of my sermons has been an unspeakable delight. The manna fell fresh every morning, and it had to me the sweetness of angels' food. Ah, there are many sharp pangs before me. None will be sharper than the hour that bids farewell to yonder blessed and beloved study. For twenty-eight years it has been my daily home—one of the dearest spots this side of Heaven. From its walls have looked down upon me the inspiring faces of Chalmers, Charles Wesley, Spurgeon, Lincoln and Gladstone, Adams, Storrs, Guthrie, Newman Hall, and my beloved teachers, Charles Hodge and the Alexanders of Princeton. Thither your infant children have been brought on Sabbath mornings, awaiting their baptism. Thither your older children have come by hundreds to converse with me about the welfare of their souls. Thither have come all the candidates for admission to the fellowship of this church, and have made there their confession of faith and

their allegiance to Christ. Oh what blessed interviews with inquirers have been held there! What sweet and happy fellowship with my successive bands of helpers, some of whom have joined the general assembly of the redeemed in glory. That hallowed study has been to me sometimes a Bochim of tears, and sometimes a Hermon, when the vision was of no man save Jesus only. And the work there has been a wider one for a far wider multitude than these walls contain this morning. I have written there nearly all the hundreds of articles which have gone out through the religious press, over this country, over Great Britain, over Europe, over Australia, Canada, India, and New Zealand. During my ministry I have published about 3200 of these articles. Many of them have been gathered into books, many of them translated into Swedish, Spanish, Dutch, and other foreign tongues. They have made the scratch of a very humble pen audible to Christendom. The consecrated pen may be more powerful than the consecrated tongue. I devoutly thank God for having condescended to use my humble pen to the spread of His gospel; and I purpose, with His help, to spend much of the brief remainder of my life in preaching His glorious gospel through the press.

I am sincerely sorry that the necessities of this hour seem to require so personal a dis-

course this morning ; but I must hide behind the example of the great apostle who gave me my text. Because he reviewed his ministry among his spiritual children of Thessalonica, I may be allowed to review my own, too—standing here this morning under such peculiar circumstances. These thirty years have been to me years of unbounded joy. Sorrow I have had, when death paid four visits to my house ; but the sorrow taught sympathy with the grief of others. Sins I have committed—too many of them ; your patient love has never cast a stone. The faults of my ministry have been my own. The successes of my ministry have been largely due, under God, to your co-operation, and, above all, to the amazing goodness of our Heavenly Father. Looking my long pastorate squarely in the face, I think I can honestly say that I have been no man's man ; I have never courted the rich, nor willfully neglected the poor ; I have never blunted the sword of the Spirit lest it should cut your consciences, or concealed a truth that might save a soul. In no large church is there a perfect unanimity of tastes as to preaching. I do not doubt that there are some of you that are quite ready for the experiment of a new face in this pulpit, and perhaps there may be some who are lusting after the fat quail of elaborate or philosophic discourse. For thirty years I have tried to feed you on “nothing but manna.”

Whatever the difference of taste, you have always stood by me, true as steel. This has been your spiritual home; and you have loved your home, and you drank every Sunday from your own well; and though the water of life has not always been passed up to you in a richly embossed silver cup, it has drawn up the undiluted gospel from the inspired fountain head. To hear the truth, to heed the truth, to "back" the truth with prayer and toil, has been the delight of the stanchest members of this church. Oh, the children of this church are inexpressibly dear to me! There are hundreds here to-day that never had any other home, nor ever knew any other pastor. I think I can say that "every baptism has baptized us into closer fellowship, every marriage has married us into closer union, every funeral that bore away your beloved dead only bound us more strongly to the living." Every invitation from another church—and I have had some very attractive ones that I never told you about—every invitation from another church has always been promptly declined; for I long ago determined never to be pastor of any other than Lafayette Avenue Church.

What is my joy or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye—ye—in the presence of Christ at His coming? Why, then, sunder a tie that is bound to every fiber of my inmost heart? I will answer you frankly. There must be no

concealment or false pretexts between us. In the first place, as I told you two months ago, I had determined to make my thirtieth anniversary the terminal point of my present pastorate. I determined not to outstay my fullest capacity for the enormous work demanded here. The extent of that demanded work increases every twelve months. The requirements of preaching twice every Sunday, to visit the vast number of families directly connected with this church, attending funeral services, conferring with committees about Christian work of various kinds, and numberless other duties—all these requirements are prodigious. Thus far, by the Divine help, I have carried that load. My health to-day is as firm as usual; and I thank God that such forces of heart and brain as He has given me are unabated. The chronic catarrh, that long ago muffled my ears to many a strain of sweet music, has never made me too deaf to hear the sweet accents of your love. But I understand my constitution well enough to know that I could not carry the undivided load of this great church a great while longer without the risk of breaking down; and there must be no risk run with you or with myself. I also desire to assist you in transferring this magnificent vessel to the next pilot whom God shall appoint; and I wish to transfer it while it is well manned, well equipped, and on the clear sea of an unbroken

financial and spiritual prosperity. No man shall ever say that I so far presumed on the generous kindness of this dear church as to linger here until I had outlived my usefulness.

For these reasons I present to-day my resignation of this sacred, precious charge. It is my honest desire and purpose that this day must terminate my present pastorate. For presenting this resignation I alone am responsible before God, before this church, and before the world. When you shall have accepted my resignation, the whole responsibility for the welfare of this beloved church will rest on your shoulders—not on mine. My earnest prayer is that you may soon be directed to the right man to be your minister, to one who shall unite all hearts and all hands, and carry forward the high and holy mission to which God has called you. He will find in me not a jealous critic, but a hearty ally in everything that he may regard for the welfare of this church.

As for myself, I do not propose to sit down on the veranda and watch the sun of life wheel downward in the west. The labors of a pen and of a ministry at large will afford me no lack of employment. The welfare of this church is inexpressibly dear to me—nothing is dearer to me this side of heaven. If, therefore, while this flock remains shepherdless, and in search of my successor, I can be of actual

service to you in supplying at any time this pulpit or performing pastoral labor, that service, beloved, shall be performed cheerfully.

The first thought, the only thought with all of us, is this church, *this church*, THIS CHURCH. I call no man my friend, you must call no man your friend, that does not stand by the interests of Lafayette Avenue Church. It is now called to meet a great emergency. For the first time in twenty-eight years this church is subjected to a severe strait. During all these years you have had very smooth sailing. You have never been crippled by debt; you have never been distracted with quarrels, and you have never been without a pastor in your pulpit or your homes when you needed him. And I suppose no church in Brooklyn has ever been subjected to less strain than this one. Now you are called upon to face a new condition of things, perhaps a new danger—certainly a new duty. The duty overrides the danger. To meet that duty you are strong in numbers. There are 2350 names on your church register. Of these, many are young children, many are non-residents who have never asked a dismission to other churches; but a great army of church members, three Sabbaths ago, rose up before that sacramental table. You are strong in a holy harmony. Let no man, no woman, break the ranks! You are strong in the protection of

that great Shepherd who never resigns and who never grows old. "Lo ! I am with you always ! Lo ! I am with you always ! Lo ! I am with you always !" seems to greet me this morning from every wall of this sanctuary. I confidently expect to see Lafayette Avenue Church move steadily forward with unbroken column, led by the Captain of our salvation. All eyes are upon you. The eye that never slumbers or sleeps is watching over you. If you are all true to conscience, true to your covenants, true to Christ, the future of this dear church may be as glorious as its past. And when another thirty years have rolled away, it may still be a strong tower of the truth on which the smile of God shall rest like the light of the morning. By as much as you love me, I entreat you not to sadden my life or break my heart by ever deserting these walls, or letting the fire of devotion burn down on these sacred altars.

The hands of the clock warn me to close. This is one of the most trying hours of my whole life. It is an hour when tears are only endurable by being rainbowed with the memory of tender mercies and holy joys. When my feet descend those steps to-day, this will no longer be my pulpit. I surrender it back before God into your hands. One of my chiefest sorrows is that I leave some of my beloved hearers out of Christ. Oh, you have been

faithfully warned here, and you have been lovingly invited here ; and once more, as though God did beseech you by me, I implore you in Christ's name to be reconciled to God. This dear pulpit, whose teachings are based on the Rock of Ages, will stand long after the lips that now address you have turned to dust. It will be visible from the judgment seat ; and its witness will be that I determined to know not anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. To-day I write the last page in the record of thirty bright, happy, Heaven-blessed years among you. What is written is written. I shall fold up the book and lay it away with all its many faults; and it will not lose its fragrance while between its leaves are the pressed flowers of your love. When my closing eyes shall look on that record for the last time, I hope to discover there only one name—the name that is above every name, the name of Him whose glory crowns this Easter morn with radiant splendor, the name of Jesus Christ, King of kings, Lord of lords. And the last words I utter in this sacred spot are, Unto Him that loves us and delivers us from sin with His precious blood, and unto God, be all the praise and thanks and dominion and glory forever and ever. Amen.



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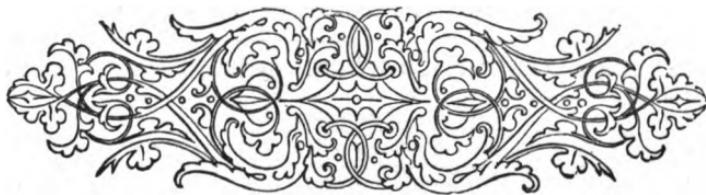
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